

During the year of 'China in France,' many Chinese tourists will visit Lille, 2004's cultural capital of Europe.

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Best eats — a summary of our favorite restaurants of 2003.

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"She had a bad temper, and on more than one occasion she threatened me with a knife."

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Suspected SARS Case Remains Unidentified

By Xiao Rong

Latest test results carried out Tuesday on the suspected SARS cases reported in southern China's Guangdong province remain inconclusive, according to a joint team of experts from China's Ministry of Health and the World Health Organization (WHO).

The ministry has decided that samples will be sent to a laboratory that is part of the WHO international reference network. WHO said in a press release Tuesday that carrying out tests at multiple labs will enhance the testing process.

A 32-year-old freelance television producer was confirmed Saturday by the Ministry of Health as a suspected SARS patient in Guangzhou, capital of south China's Guangdong Province.

His condition is stable and his temperature has been normal over the last several days, a doctor at the No. 8 People's Hospital, where the suspected SARS patient is receiving treatment in quarantine, told Xinhua News Agency.

"It is not unexpected that a few cases of suspected SARS have been reported, since it is not likely that the SARS virus will die out so soon after its emergence," commented Professor Zhong Nanshan, director of the Guangzhou Institute of Respiratory Diseases, who has been fighting SARS since late last year.

This is the first suspected SARS case discovered since May 23, when WHO lifted the SARS-related travel advisory on Guangdong. The first recorded SARS case emerged in Foshan city, also in Guangdong, in November 2002.

To date, none of the 42 people quarantined after having close contact with the suspected patient have shown symptoms of the disease, according to the Ministry of Health.

Meanwhile, Chinese health authorities will ban from conducting further research all SARS research laboratories that fail new licensing tests set up by the Ministry of Science and Technology.

Experts will check that all labs conducting SARS research nationwide strictly adhere to the set standards of grade-three bio-security, the second highest of the four bio-security levels, and those that pass will receive new licenses, announced the Ministry of Health Tuesday.

WHO commented positively on cooperation by the Ministry of Health, representatives of which have met daily with WHO officials and provided WHO with comprehensive information, including the patient's clinical history and test results, since the suspected case was reported last Saturday.

Chinese Rescue Team Arrives in Quake-hit Iran

A 43-member Chinese rescue team began work Sunday shortly after arriving in the quake-ravaged city of Bam, in Iran's southeastern province of Kerman.

The Chinese team, the first Asian rescue mission to arrive in the disaster area, has been divided into several groups and joined the local rescue teams in the search for survivors.

A strong earthquake measuring 6.3 on the Richter scale rocked Bam on early Friday, destroying 90 percent of the buildings in the ancient Silk Road city. The Iranian Interior

Ministry said Sunday that over 20,000 people have been confirmed dead so far.

At Kerman airport, scores of injured people were waiting to be transferred to other cities for treatment. Some were being carried on makeshift stretchers by soldiers.

Many Iranians have flown in from other parts of the country to find news about missing loved ones.

Meanwhile, the earthquake has caused disruption of the water and power supplies and communication in the city.

(Xinhua)



Chinese rescue workers join local rescue teams in Bam.

Xinhua Photo



Wang Sen, Yin Ziqi and Liu Nan in Daxing'anling Forest Area in September.

By Wang Xiaoxiao

After over three months of hard travel, three youths from Beijing are on the last leg of a record-breaking roller-blading journey from China's far north to the southernmost tip of Hainan. Yin Ziqi 18, Wang Sen 17 and Liu Nan 22, set out on September 13 from Mohe, a village in the far north of Heilongjiang Province, to rollerblade all the way to Sanya, Hainan Province.

When they started planning the journey two years ago, they were confident that someone would sponsor them. The three drew up a long list of equipment they would need, including different types of shoes for various road conditions and sets of spare wheels. The wish-list came to a total of 50 thousand yuan, but after being rejected by several companies, they lost heart. No one would believe the three youngsters would finish such an ambitious journey.

"We aren't doing this for commercial purposes, perhaps that's why the companies were not willing to support us," Yin told *Beijing Today* Monday in a telephone interview from Guangzhou. "Most people know very little about this amazing sport," he replied when asked why they wanted to rollerblade such a vast distance. Liu added, "And if the 2008 Olympic Games would add in-line skating because of our hard work, how cool and great it would be!"

Liu read in the Guinness Book of World Records earlier this year that a Finn had set a roller-blading world record by skating across Finland, a distance of about 2,800 kilometers. The three submitted an application in April to the Guinness World Records liaison officer in China to make a new world record. According to the officer, they should collect the postmarks of the places they passed through as evidence of their journey.

They finally set out on their journey of some 7,000 kilometers on September 13, without any financial backing. Both Yin and Wang are still students, and had to ask their schools for special leave. In order to be easily visible to drivers, they wore yellow overcoats, and each carried a large backpack weighing about 25 kilograms.

The first few days were the hardest, because they had to skate through the mountainous Daxing'anling national forest area. Being the middle of the highest fire-danger season, it was very quiet as cars were not permitted in the park.



Yin Ziqi and Liu Nan on Highway 104, 50 kilometers from Nanjing.

Photo by Wang Sen

Blading South

Three youths from Beijing make history skating across China

Skating down hill was most risk-prone, because their professional five-wheeled blades had no brakes, making it easy to reach dangerous speeds.

Their worst fears were soon realized: Three days after setting out, they were skating down hill towards a small village at the foot of the mountain, and just as the road leveled out, a barrier blocking access to the mountain came into view. Although the three were unable to stop in time, Yin and Wang squatted down and skated under the barrier, however, Liu, the tallest of the three, was not so lucky. He struck the barrier and fell, subsequently requiring five stitches in his jaw at a small hospital in the village.

"We were so grateful that they didn't ask us for a cent when they learned what we were doing," said Yin. Fortunately Liu's injury was not serious and they were able to set off again after a short rest.

Continuous rain in the following days further hampered the journey. All three caught colds and they had to stop for two days at another village. "I thought to myself, 'why are we suffering so,' and was hit by a feeling of homesickness, but I got over it. That might have been the hardest time for us I guess, the rest of our journey was much easier," said Yin.

The three averaged 100 to 150 kilometers a day, depending on the road condition, weather and their state of health. Their average speed was about 20 kilometers per hour and they skated six to seven hours a day. "But at times, we reached speeds of 50 or 60 kilometers per hour. We even raced with cars on the roads," said Yin proudly.

Having passed through Heilongjiang, Jilin, Liaoning, Hebei, Beijing, Tianjin, Shandong, Jiangsu, Shanghai, Anhui, Zhejiang, Fujian and most of Guangdong, the three are due to reach Sanya early in the New Year. Each has spent 5,000 to 6,000 yuan of their own money, staying in the cheapest hotels and eating the cheapest food.

After being interviewed by several newspapers and TV stations, they say they have already become well-known, and some companies have at last offered to support them financially, but have been politely refused. "Since we said that we were doing this all by ourselves, we won't accept sponsorship any more," Yin said. "We've learnt a lot along our way, much more than we could ever learn from books alone. I feel happy and lucky that we didn't give up after the accident in Daxing'anling."

EXECUTIVE EDITOR: ZHANG XIAOXIAO
EDITOR: XIAO RONG
DESIGNER: LI SHI

Evacuees from Deadly Gas Explosion Heading Home

By Zhang Ran

By early this week, nearly 60,000 people evacuated following a deadly explosion of toxic gas last Tuesday in Kaixian County, Chongqing Municipality, had returned to their homes. The blast claimed 234 lives and injured thousands.

After struggling for two hours to pump mud into the well from which the gas leaked, emergency teams and technicians finally sealed it off at 11:00 am last Saturday, according to the Xinhua News Agency.

Since Sunday morning, a team of 600 workers has been carrying out massive efforts to disinfect the polluted area. Environmental protection staff, health and epidemic prevention workers and over 1,000 soldiers, armed police and militia have joined in the rescue efforts. The Ministry of Civil Affairs has sent over 10,000 quilts to the area, a spokesman for the county government said Sunday.

An investigation team has been established to launch a probe into the accident. After the explosion, the death toll continued to rise to 234 as more bodies were found in nearby mountainous villages, according to the local government. A total of 10,175 people have been hospitalized, around 80 of whom remain in serious condition.

By Sunday, the identities of 110 victims from 58 families had been confirmed, according to Du Lianjian, director of the civil affairs bureau of Kaixian County.

Evacuees began returning home

Sunday morning, some accompanied by medical personnel, after their villages were confirmed safe. The local government secured electricity supply and instructed all shops to open to guarantee availability of daily necessities.

A Xinhua report on Monday quoted Zhang Shaozhi, director of the Chongqing Municipal Environmental Protection Bureau, as saying, "According to analysis of environmental data from the site, both the atmosphere and surface water quality are safe enough for villages to return home."

"No gas has escaped since the well was successfully sealed on Saturday," said Zeng Shitian, professor and engineer with the Sichuan petroleum administration bureau. However, the gas well will remain closed until practical safety measures are taken to prevent a repeat of the tragedy. That announcement was made by Wang Xianzheng, director of the State Administration of Work Safety and deputy director of the work safety committee of the State Council, who is leading the State Council-organized survey team.

On Saturday, the China Insurance Regulatory Commission (CIRC) urged insurance companies in Chongqing to pay prompt compensation to victims of the catastrophe.

Official figures show that local clients in the affected area have bought premiums worth a total of 400 million yuan, 230 million yuan of which is property coverage and the rest life insurance.



Nearly 60,000 people were evacuated from villages in Kaixian County, Chongqing, following last Tuesday's tragedy.
Xinhua Photo

Ban Slapped on Beef from America

By Ma Jianfei

Following the outbreak of mad cow disease in the US, on December 26, the Beijing Entry-Exit Inspection and Quarantine Bureau sealed up three batches of beef imported from America, weighing a total of 70.77 tons and worth over 360,000 yuan.

Bureau staff sealed off the beef after it had been declared at customs at Capital International Airport. They proceeded to quarantine and disinfect the transport planes and carefully dispose of garbage and waste water from the aircraft.

Investigations into cattle imported from the US in the past few years, as well as their progeny, have been launched by the bureau.

The bureau has also released a notice demanding that all its branches stop accepting applications for entry and quarantine approval for cows and most related products from America and directly forbidding their import. Possibly infected cattle are to be returned or destroyed immediately, and any cows or related products from the US in Chinese ports not yet declared are to be sealed and quarantined.

Gu Zhaoxue, assistant to the general manager of the Xinfadi food market in Fengtai District, told *Beijing News* last Friday that sales from beef had dropped, though little American beef is sold at the market. Managers of supermarkets and groceries near Wangfujing and Xidan described similar situations.

Mad cow disease has never appeared in China, said Zhang Zhongqiu, deputy director of the Ministry of Agriculture's Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Bureau, in Beijing on December 27. He reassured the public that national prevention and monitoring systems are likely to keep this country mad cow-free.

To date, economic damage from the tightened security around American beef has been minimal, in part because many restaurants use domestic beef.

"Though our hotel has used beef from the US, all our meat has passed animal quarantine certification. We will increase our imports from Australia, so the ban on American beef should have little influence on us if it continues for a long time," the food and beverage manager of the Beijing Lidu Holiday Inn hotel, who requested anonymity, told *Beijing Business* on December 25.

Banking Regulations Get Stamp of Approval

By Wang Xiaoxiao

Three key banking regulations, the draft law on banking supervision, the amendment of the Law on Commercial Banks and the amendment of the Law on the People's Bank of China, were approved last Saturday at the sixth session of the Tenth National People's Congress (NPC) Standing Committee.

The NPC Law Committee formally ratified the creation of the China Banking Regulatory Commission (CBRC), the body set up in April last year to take over supervision of banks and financial institutions, investigate illegal banking operations and mete out punishments for violations of the law.

The law symbolizes the shift of the country's bank supervision policy from simply monitoring the legitimacy of operations to putting equal importance on both legitimacy and risk control.

"The new law is practical and designed to meet the needs of the long-term operation of the CBRC," Zhang Xiao, a member of the NPC Standing Committee, told Xinhua Monday.

CBRC Chairman Liu Mingkang has also assembled a council of international advisors, including Sir Edward George, former governor of the Bank of England, to help the supervisory body handle reforms.

The amendment of the Law on Commercial Banks relaxes rules regarding lenders and leaves room for banks to possibly engage in non-banking financial businesses. Commercial lenders were previously barred from entering such fields as securities and insurance. Under this revised law, strictly supervised authorization of non-banking financial business will begin on February 1.

However, that reform has raised

questions about the preparedness of the three national watchdogs for China's banking, securities and insurance industries, the China Banking Regulatory Commission (CBRC), the China Securities Regulatory Commission (CSRC) and the China Insurance Regulatory Commission (CIRC). "Laws have to impose rigid regulations upon banks that wish to engage in non-banking financial businesses, since supervision mechanisms are not yet in place," Jiang Qiangui, vice-chairwoman of the NPC Law Committee told Xinhua.

An article in Monday's *Financial Times* said the move is aimed at giving domestic banks access to additional revenue sources before the industry is opened to further foreign investment in 2006.

The amendment of the Law on the People's Bank of China focuses on the central bank's performance in monetary policy management. With this reform, the central bank has new rights to crack down on money laundering nationwide, crimes previously dealt with by the Ministry of Public Security.

All Aboard! Batong Subway Line Up and Running

By Dong Nan

The new Batong Subway line, the capital's fourth underground line, opened at 9:25 am on December 26. Its first passenger was Xu Chen, 14, a resident of Banbidian in Tongzhou District.

The Batong line runs outside the East Fourth Ring Road, starting at the Sihui station of the No. 1 line and ending at Tuqiao station in Tongzhou. There are 13 stations along the 19 kilometer route. Trains run at intervals of 10 to 15 minutes and it takes on average just 32 to travel from start to finish.

Single tickets for travel on the new

line cost 2 yuan and transfer tickets 4 yuan, each 1 yuan lower than original plans. The prices were cut after many participants at a public hearing held December 13 suggested such a move. *Beijing Today* reported on that hearing on December 19.

According to statistics from the Beijing Public Traffic Company, 120,000 person-time trips are made between Tongzhou and downtown every day, rendering transfer spots Sihui and Sihuidong two of the most congested areas in Beijing at rush hour. The opening of the Batong line is directly aimed at relieving traffic jams in these growing areas.

BOC (Hong Kong) Authorized as RMB Clearing Bank

The Bank of China (BOC) would spare no effort to support BOC Hong Kong (BOCHK) to provide settlement service for yuan transactions in Hong Kong, a bank spokesman said last Wednesday.

BOC, the largest shareholder of BOCHK, was very glad to see that it was appointed the clearing bank, spokesman Wang Zhaoen told Xinhua after the People's Bank of China (PBOC), the nation's central bank, authorized BOCHK to act as a clearing bank for individual RMB yuan business in Hong Kong last Wednesday. The Hong Kong Mon-

etary Authority (HKMA) said last Wednesday it had been notified by the PBOC of its decision to appoint BOCHK as the clearing bank for RMB yuan business in Hong Kong for a term of three years.

The central bank signed a cooperation memorandum for conducting Renminbi business in Hong Kong with HKMA on November 19 last year. Licensed banks in Hong Kong will be permitted to conduct yuan services confined to four areas, yuan deposits, Hong Kong dollar-yuan conversions, yuan credit cards and yuan remittances, starting this month. (Xinhua)

Probe 1 Put in Orbit

China launched a high-altitude satellite into preset orbit on Tuesday morning using a Long March 2C/SM carrier rocket, according to witnesses at the Xichang Satellite Launch Center in Sichuan Province. The satellite is the first of its kind launched by China and part of a space probe program carried out jointly by China and the European Space Agency (ESA). The equatorial orbiting satellite, named Probe No. 1, was launched at 3:06 am Tuesday.

Probe No. 1 is the first satellite of the Double Star Project and the highest orbiting satellite China has ever launched. The 350-kilogram craft is expected to work in space for 18 months. Proposed by Chinese scientists in 1997, the Double Star Project is the first China-Europe joint satellite probe program. Probe No. 1 will be followed by Probe No. 2, a polar orbiting satellite scheduled to go up next year. The two craft will investigate important areas of unprobed magnetic fields around the Earth. (Xinhua)

Fifth Ring Tollbooths Closed

By Zhang Ran

The charging of tolls for travel on Beijing's Fifth Ring Road stopped as of yesterday. The road is now considered an urban expressway intended to ease downtown traffic congestion and more closely link satellite towns with the city center, as announced at a press conference held by the Beijing Traffic Bureau.

The cancellation of tolls is likely to spur more use of the roadway. Many new entrance and exit ramps and auxiliary roads will be constructed or rebuilt this year to allow greater traffic flow.

The nearly 100-kilometer long Fifth Ring Road opened to traffic on November 1 last year and runs through or near several large residential areas, Olympic venues, science parks and the Beijing Economic Development Zone. However, traffic use over the past few months was limited, presumably as a result of the tolls.

Local Car Shows Reunited

By Xiao Shan

The two Beijing auto shows scheduled for this year will be merged into one larger event, the Beijing Auto Show, the organizers of the two exhibitions announced at the China International Exhibition Center. The main exhibition hall of the China International Exhibition Center will serve as the primary venue for the event, scheduled to run from June 9 to 16, and the China National Agricultural Exhibition Center will be the secondary site.

Beijing has organized seven international auto shows since 1990, but the four organizers of the original events split into two groups last November, each planning to hold their own concurrent events in June.

Beijing-based *Fortune Times* commented last Thursday that traffic and limited exhibition space were reasons for the creation of two shows. Though Wang said the 2004 auto show would have an exhibition floor space of 120,000 square meters, the combined area of the China International Exhibition Center and Agricultural Exhibition Center falls nearly 50,000 square meters short of that mark.

SK Sets up Hospital

By Shan Jinliang

Face lifts, tummy tucks and nose jobs have become more available in the capital following the trial opening of the SK Hospital Beijing, a joint venture facility established by South Korea's SK Group, on Tuesday.

SK Groups holds a 70 percent stake in the hospital, set to officially open in March. The International Exchange and Cooperation Center of the Ministry of Health owns a 20 percent stake and Fuzhou Shuxin Technology Corporation holds the remaining share. SK Group is South Korea's third largest enterprise and mainly engaged in the fields of energy and telecom.

The new hospital, located in Shuiduizi, Chaoyang District, is targeted at middle and upper class families, meaning those with monthly incomes of 20,000 yuan or more, said SK Hospital Beijing CEO Choi Chang Ik at Tuesday's opening ceremony.

SK China is talking with domestic partners regarding its plans to open 20 chains nationwide by 2010 and establish research institutes in Beijing and Shanghai.

Fortune Global 500 Crowd into China Market

By Xiao Rong

Two Hundred fifty-eight Fortune Global 500 (2001) listed multinational companies have established operations in Beijing, an increase of 15 on last year, according to the 2003 survey conducted by *Beijing Today* and released on September 12.

Since March, *Beijing Today* has interviewed 55 CEOs and chief representatives of the 258 companies in Beijing, who discussed their latest business progress and initiatives, as well as criticisms and suggestions to the city.

For those among the 55 companies that have begun operations in China, China or the Asia-Pacific region is playing an increasingly important role in their businesses worldwide. The huge potential of the growing Chinese market is a key reason that companies like Motorola, Toshiba, Samsung, Nortel Networks, have established regional headquarters or made major investments here.

Automobile manufacturers and companies related to the automobile industry seem to have benefited from the burgeoning automobile market in China, especially in Beijing, where car ownership now stands at two million.

The insurance industry has begun to experience encouraging changes after patiently waiting for the opening of China's insurance market following the country's WTO entry. Of the six insurance companies *Beijing Today* interviewed, five set up new, fully licensed branch operations in Chinese cities in 2002.

The improvement in the construction of infrastructure and public facilities, especially the municipality's efforts in curbing air pollution, are visible changes that have won appreciation. The awareness of the Beijing government to increase efficiency and transparency has also been highly praised.

Nevertheless, many suggestions were forthcoming as to what needs to be improved regarding the consistency of policies and regulations and the interactive communication between local government and foreign enterprises.

"China's influence over the global market seems to be getting heavier and stronger. We cannot ignore a very competitive market like China," comments Takano Akiyoshi, chairman of Sanyo Electric (China), which is a common belief that most Fortune Global 500 companies interviewed shared.

Childcare Expert Sues China Youth Daily

By Sun Ming

Liu Jie once had the reputation of being China's leading childcare expert, but her reputation was tarnished early this year when five people reported to Beijing Zhanlanlu Police Station that Liu had cheated them.

Many of Liu's clients believed in Liu not only because of the media hype but also because of her book introducing her experience of helping babies and her theories. Liu told of how she trained the son of renowned CCTV host Bai Yansong in the book.

However, according to some clients, what Liu said and did was always the same with all babies and was very strange. For example, she said babies should lie face down to avoid damaging their head and should drink cold milk to train their stomach.

According to the five clients who reported Liu to police, Liu never returned money to clients who were dissatisfied with her service. *China Youth Daily* published stories from February 8 to 12 claiming that Liu has cheated a number of clients.

However, *Beijing Today* interviewed several Liu's clients on the phone on February 12 and some are quite satisfied with Liu.

In an interview with *Beijing Today* on February 11, Liu denied that she had cheated anyone and said no one had asked for their money back. Liu brought a lawsuit against *China Youth Daily* to Beijing Dongcheng District People's Court last month.



Beijing Today Contributes to SARS Coverage

By Xiao Rong

In the atypical spring of 2003 when severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) hit the capital, *Beijing Today* published a series of SARS specials detailing some of the close encounters of Beijing residents with the epidemic.

The paper also highlighted the endeavors of the foreign community, who stood up in support of the city and its struggle against the virus. Most of the expatriate workers in Beijing chose to stay rather than leave and some shared with us their experiences in the face of SARS.

Our staff reporters also braved the quarantined areas to interview those special figures, from medical staff to logistics teams in hospitals, from suspected SARS victims under quarantine to volunteers, whose courage and dedication constitute elements of real news stories.

With the progress of the city's battle against SARS, *Beijing Today* also focused on the efforts of different industries in minimizing the impact of SARS and promoting economic recovery.

Peasant Millionaire Sentenced on Iffy Financial Charges

By Xiao Rong

The announcement on October 30 of well-known peasant millionaire Sun Dawu being sentenced to three years' jail and four years' probation for illegal fund-raising highlighted for many the pitfalls of China's financial system, which impede the development of private domestic enterprises.

Not long after Sun was detained by local police in Hebei Province this July, *Beijing Today* visited Xushui county, where Sun has built his empire since 1985, and published the story on page 1 on July 25.

Sun Dawu, 49, chairman of Dawu Agriculture and Breeding

Group, was accused in September by Xushui County Procuratorate Court of violating banking laws and State Council regulations by borrowing over 13 million yuan from almost 5,000 local farmers since 1995. The amount stood as high as 181 million yuan at the beginning of Sun's detention.

"Local villagers volunteered to invest their money in our company to support our development, because Dawu Group has contributed a lot to the local economy over these years," said Sun's son Sun Meng, now acting chairman of the Group.

Dawu Group has provided jobs to over 300 people in Langwuzhuang village and paid salaries totaling over two million yuan per year, according to him. Sun Dawu also established the private Dawu High School in 1998, keeping tuition charges low so that the

school was reliant on funds from the Group to keep operating. After investing nearly 1.7 million yuan in the school, Sun began to seek outside financing to support its operation.

Xushui county government, however, maintained that it was illegal for Dawu Group to raise funds from the general public without authorization from the People's Bank of China. The Xushui People's Bank told the company repeatedly to stop the illegal fund raising, according to Yu Zhenhai, director of the press office of the county party committee.

"Due to our rapid development, we have frequently applied to borrow money from local state banks since 1998, but seldom with success," said Liu Ping, acting vice president of Dawu Group. "That's why we had to finance the growth of our



Sun Dawu

business by raising funds from employees and local villagers."

In the opinion of Li Zhiying, secretary of Beijing Renben Development and Research Center, Sun Dawu's case reflects the universal difficulty of China's private enterprises in raising finance for development.

"Most private enterprises in China have actually been trying underground loans as a way of raising funds, given that the government is monopolizing the finance sector by only authorizing state banks to grant loans," he said.

According to Liu Ping, Sun's case is being used as precedent for dangerous attacks on private entrepreneurs, as some local governments in Shanxi, Shaanxi and Guizhou provinces are lining up to punish some other private entrepreneurs on the same grounds that ended up putting Sun in jail.



Wang Mingcheng

Right to Die Challenges Traditions

By Xiao Rong

As brain death and euthanasia legislation remains a blank area in China, two cases that have aroused heated controversy stand out in 2003 and are set to become milestones in changing the centuries-old prejudices.

In *Beijing Today's* front-page story on April 18, Mao Zijun expressed his firm belief that by allowing doctors to turn off the life support system that was keeping his brain dead father breathing, he did the right thing.

"Honestly, I didn't know my father was the first case of 'brain death' in China. I just accepted the fact that he was dead at the time, when the doctors told me. I believe them, it's science," said Mao Zijun, 30, the only son of the family.

Mao and his family have become the target of intense criticism from some corners of society where filial piety, or devotion to one's parents and family members,

remains a central element in people's life and thought.

In announcing the brain death of Mao Zijun's father in accordance with China's latest "Brain Death Diagnosis Criteria," Wuhan Tongji Hospital in central China's Hubei Province has also been under great pressure as a result of Mao's case.

Zhang Suming, one of the doctors in charge of treating Mao's father, claimed their ultimate goal by making the announcement to the media is to accelerate the legislation process concerning brain death in China and to help the public learn more about the issue.

Wang Mingcheng has become another figure that should be remembered for his 17 years of struggle to safeguard his right of euthanasia that ended with his death on August 3.

Wang's mother, Xia Suwen, became the first euthanasia case in China in 1986. Wang Mingcheng, who requested that his mother be allowed to die, and Pu Liansheng, the doctor who wrote the prescription, were arrested and charged with homicide. The two were declared

innocent of committing any crime five years later.

Seventeen years later, the man who once helped his terminally ill mother die is now himself dying of advanced stomach and liver cancer. Since early 2003, Wang Mingcheng has been repeatedly making requests for euthanasia to Xi'an Jiaotong University No.2 Hospital. He presented his handwritten three page application, which took him ten days to finish, on June 6.

In the application, he wrote, "I, myself, request to have euthanasia. I want to be relieved from the pain, to reduce the economic burden brought on my family and end this waste of social resources; it is a symbol of humanity's civilization and social progress."

However, Wang's request was rejected by the hospital on the grounds that there is no law governing euthanasia in China. "No one has the right to deprive another person of his right to be alive," was the explanation offered by the hospital in *Beijing Today's* front-page story on June 13.

Peasants and Treasures

By Xiao Rong

A shovel or two of dirt uncovered 27 priceless artifacts and changed the lives of five peasants.

"It's totally good luck," said Wang Laqian, who, together with four colleagues, Wang Ningxian, Wang Mingsuo, Zhang Qinhuai and Wang Qinning, were treated to a special trip to the capital on March 9 to attend the opening of an exhibition of the bronzeware artifacts they unearthed in their hometown in Mei County, Shaanxi on January 19.

A total of 27 pieces of rare bronzeware, dating back to the Western Zhou Dynasty (1066-771 BC), were unearthed. The discovery



The five peasants at the exhibition opening.

covery is the largest of its kind, in terms of the number of pieces, their size and the quantity of the inscriptions, and were described by experts as being of inestimable value to archaeological research.

Lending drama to the story is the fact that the five were awarded 20,000 yuan

each by the local government, the highest reward ever for individuals reporting the discovery of ancient relics.

With annual incomes averaging 1,500 yuan, the 20,000-yuan prize was a windfall for all five, whose story appeared on the front page of *Beijing Today* on March 14.

While the five struck it rich for their big finds, another nine farmers, also from Shaanxi Province, who unearthed one of the most extraordinary archeological finds in history were not so lucky.

The site the men found when digging a well back in 1974, now turns out to be Pit One of the Emperor Qin's Terracotta Army.

As a reward, the authorities gave the nine 30 yuan at the time to share between them. They considered it enough then, but now they want something more, not money, just recognition that they were the ones

who discovered the Terracotta Warriors.

Five of the men have already passed away, but Yang Xinman, Yang Peiyan and Yang Quanyi have belatedly presented an application in December to local authorities for a certificate naming them "Discoverers of the Qin Terracotta Army," the first case of this kind in China.

"We fulfilled our obligation to protect and report the cultural heritage when we discovered it. Why should we not have recognition? Without a certificate, the value of what we did will not be clear," stated Yang Xinman.

In the opinion of Mao Jiaxing, the lawyer hired by the three peasants, recognizing them as discoverers could help promote protection of cultural heritage and make people more active in bringing cultural finds to the attention of the authorities.



The British Museum's controversial Parthenon Sculptures

Special Issue for SARS

People will never forget what happened during the first half of 2003 in China. The whole nation had to battle with severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS). Fortunately, we conquered all the difficulties, but at the price of many lives. The key now is to sum up lessons and take measures so that it doesn't happen again. The following are some of the ideas that emerged.

Joerg Wuttke, chairman of the German Chamber of Commerce in China

In my opinion, it is not a medical crisis, as out of a population of 13 million people in Beijing less than 2,000 were infected. I feel it is a confidence crisis. People did not trust the government and they still struggle with the idea of whether the authorities can cope with the situation. Only co-ordinated transparent action by the government will help to restore confidence. **Claudio Bonfatti, Italian, Agrilandia farm owner in Shunyi district, east of Beijing**

The information should be more balanced. I think in this kind of situation, people have to be warned not to be scared.

I see many bulletins coming into our embassy and other sources. They just warn people to use precautions to pay more attention but they don't tell people how many have died. This just scares people.

David N. Tool, visiting professor at Beijing Second Foreign Language Institute

There are times when we must spit, but it can be done in a safe manner and in a safe place. Just as education of the people in the West ended this major transmission of tuberculosis (TB), better education and attention to this dreadful social practice is needed in China, as well as warnings that it can spread SARS.

Issue 102

Journalists in the Front Line

By Ivy Zhang

Twelve journalists died within three weeks of the outbreak of the war in Iraq, accounting for 2% of the 600 journalists covering the conflict.

In response to questions about the incident at the Palestine Hotel, which was crowded with international reporters and was fired on by a US tank, killing a Reuters journalist and a Spanish journalist on April 8, Victoria Clarke, the US Defense Department's spokeswoman, said she had repeatedly warned the news media that "war is a dangerous, dangerous business." Is it worthwhile for journalists to report on such a dangerous business at such risk to their lives? Insiders' opinions follow:

Ed Lanfranco, UPI Bureau Chief, Beijing

I do not value the life of a reporter above those of the combatants and non-combatants who also perished during the Iraqi war.

All deaths on all sides are a tragedy. War correspondents go into dangerous situations accepting a high risk (possible death) for high reward (great stories).

Determining whether or not those who died did so in vain depends on the nature of the peace and social justice secured after the war. Winning the peace is just as important as victory in war.

Dr. Gary Rice, a Fulbright Lecturer at the Foreign Affairs College in Beijing and Nankai University in Tianjin. He has taught a class in War and the News Media in the United States.

If truth is the first casualty of war, journalists themselves have been frequent casualties in this conflict. I cringe every time I hear of a journalist dying, but I also know that each and every one chose to be there, doing their jobs for a variety of reasons. All were aware of the dangers and risks when they elected to go. Soldiers have to go into combat, journalists choose to go.

Issue 100

Born a Scholar, Made a Butcher

By Dong Nan

The 38-year-old Lu Buxuan enjoyed his two days of fame on July 26 and 27 last year, when the Chinese media reported his story: top-ranking student in the college entrance examination in Chang'an, Shaanxi province in 1985, graduate of the Chinese language department of Beijing University in 1989. The once acclaimed scholar is now a butcher.

After graduating from Beijing University, Lu was assigned to a diesel oil machine factory in Chang'an, until the factory closed down several years later. Then unemployed, Lu tried his hand at a number of trades including selling furniture and a drugstore, but all ended in failure. Finally in 2000, Lu just managed to

survive by opening a modest butcher shop.

"I can't afford to talk about grand words such as 'ideal', but it might not be so bad if I can be a good butcher," Lu told *Huashang Daily* with a bitter smile.

Lu's extensive media coverage won him nationwide compassion and concern. Many colleges and institutes offered him a job as a Chinese teacher. Lu's alma mater, Beijing University, also expressed concern and the desire to help. Suddenly faced with so many opportunities, Lu admitted to feeling "a bit dazzled."

What does Lu's story say about today's society? Does having a diploma make any difference to one's fate? Opinions follow:

Tian Yongqiang, Educational Administration department, Beijing University

Traditional ideas remain, such as "a good student should work as an official" and "study is supreme." Today they are groundless. Society needs a wide range of people. Students can be butchers too.

Lee, retired official

Ironically, people talk about the "shortage of talent" everyday, but most leaders pay no attention at all to talented people. In the elementary school of my hometown, mere junior high school graduates are hired as teachers by high-ranking officials. But my cousin, who graduated from a technical secondary school, was refused because he didn't have the

proper "background".

Zhao Jingjing, student of Beijing University

If the media focuses on one guy just because he graduated from Beijing University,

with total disregard for his true ability, personal effort and individual personality, then I think it's just senseless and unfair

Issue 116



Lu Buxuan and his diploma

Sex Blog Cuts Deep



Muzimei

By Dong Nan / Wang Xiaoxiao

Muzimei, a 25-year-old editor of City Pictorial, a magazine in Guangzhou, has excited considerable interest with her online diary *Yiqingshu* (Memo of Love) recently.

Miss Mu was already well known for her racy magazine column that dealt with love and sex. From June 19 this year, she also began to post her diary on blogcn.com, the largest website in China for "blog", the Internet term for online diaries. Most of the contents are about her sexual experiences with different partners every couple of weeks. In the diary, she often uses the men's real names.

In August, Muzimei wrote about a night she spent with Wang Lei, a well-known rock star in Guangzhou. She described all the details, even down to Wang's sexual ability.

Earlier last November, China's three biggest websites, sina.com, sohu.com and netease.com reported

Muzimei's story. Soon after that, the server for blogcn.com broke down because so many visitors were trying to read Muzimei's diary.

"I take these sexual affairs as they come. Like other things, it is what people need," Muzimei wrote in her diary on November 6.

The discussion about Muzimei's attitude and her writing style on the Internet have already been described as the "Muzimei phenomenon". Opinions follow:

Li Yinhe, renowned sociologist and sexologist

I think society should be able to tolerate different values.

Zhou Xiaozheng, sociologist, Renmin University

Muzimei's sexual diary is even more terrible than erotic VCDs.

Huangaidongxi, renowned novelist, column writer, lives in Guangzhou

All she's doing is having sex. But

she is seen as subversive. I like her style of writing and her stories.

Wei Jiang, 32, female

She's not the only one that has chaotic relationships with men, but she's the first one to tell us all about it.

Li Peng, 26, male

If we take it as some kind of literary work, it doesn't deserve much attention. So just let it be. We don't have to make such a fuss.

Wei Neng, 32, male

Actually people like to talk about sex, but are afraid to. She is helping to open this theme in public.

Stephan, 45, male, German

Muzimei is just doing what she likes; she didn't break the law, so why is she to blame? It's the fault of the Chinese media! It doesn't provide controlled outlets for this kind of thing, that's where the problem is!

Issue 130

Give it Back!

Chinese organization rejects museums' declaration

By Chen Ying

Should artworks taken from countries centuries ago be returned? It is a vexing problem between the current owners of the artworks and the countries of origin. The issue came to the public eye again when 19 international museums and institutions issued a declaration at the end of 2002 saying that it would be improper to return ancient overseas artworks to their original countries.

In *Beijing Youth Daily* on January 13 2003, China's Lost Cultural Relics Recovery Program (CLCRRP) said that the museums declaration contradicted the spirit of the UNESCO Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property (1970). The convention seeks to protect cultural property against theft, illicit export and wrongful removal.

A great number of museums in Europe, America and Japan, including the Louvre Museum in Paris and the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, have collected thousands of artworks from other countries.

Greece, Egypt, China and many other countries have joined the clamor for ancient artworks removed over the centuries to be returned, especially those looted during wars or acquired through illegal means. Opinions follow:

Wang Weiming, the chief executive of

China's Lost Cultural Relics Recovery Program

The artworks would be more beautiful and awe-inspiring in their original environment.

Neil MacGregor, Director of the British Museum

The British Museum is the best possible place for the sculptures from the Parthenon to be displayed.

Ildiko DeAngelis, Director, Museum Studies Program, George Washington University

Museums are facing requests for the return of some of these objects. The problem I see is where does this stop? Are we going to empty every museum around the world and return objects to the geographic boundaries in which they were created? What happens then to the idea of a common cultural heritage?

Harold Holzer, Vice President for Communications and Marketing at the Metropolitan Museum of Art

Without the works and art, there would be no reason for great museums to exist. There would be no way for people to be introduced to the culture of the East here without the works of art.

Jiang Yingchun, curator, Poly Art Museum

It's like saying that slaves were always hungry before the slave traders took them to America and that they were at least fed by their owners. Would you praise the slave traders for protecting slaves?

Issue 88

Humor or Humiliation?

Nanjingers insulted by foreigners' T-shirt

By Chen Ying

Locals in Nanjing were enraged when they saw a foreigner wearing a T-shirt with Chinese words reading "ten warnings for Chinese" on June 14 last year.

When the male foreigner, accompanied by a Chinese girl, entered a restaurant on Yanggongjing Street, he soon found people paying more attention to him than normal.

They felt angry after seeing the tips for Chinese printed on the back of the foreigner's T-shirt: don't stare at foreigners; charge the same price for both Chinese and foreigners; don't say hello or OK to foreigners; don't give them fake money or offer them an unreasonable exchange rate; allow foreigners to stay in cheap hotels.

An angry exchange ensued and police had to be summoned to take those involved to Huaihailu Police Station near the restaurant. Soon two officers from the Foreign Affairs Office of Baixiaqu Police Bureau came to the station to mediate in the case. About an hour later, the argument was

sorted out and the foreigner promised not to wear the T-shirt again.

"The girl told me they just thought the T-shirt was humorous," Xing Yuanyuan, a reporter from a local newspaper, told *Beijing Today*.

"As the foreigner said, the T-shirt he wore was made in China. It's improper to say he intended to insult Chinese," a spokesman from the Propaganda Office of the Political Department of Nanjing Police Bureau told *Beijing Today*.

Was the foreigners' behavior an insult to Chinese? Or is there nothing to get upset about? Opinions follow.

Xia Xueluan, professor from Department of Sociology, Beijing University

I think the Nanjingers' reaction was reasonable. The important thing is who can wear this kind of T-shirt. Of course, if a Chinese person wears it there's no problem. It could even help in treating foreigners properly. But it's totally different if a foreigner wears the T-shirt. In my mind, it's

an insult to Chinese people.

Cai Fanghua, commentator from Beijing Youth Daily

Being tolerant of criticism shows an open-minded psychology. So if Nanjingers see a foreigner wearing such a T-shirt again in future, I suggest they discuss it with them instead of quarrelling.

Andrew McEwen, from Britain

I believe in freedom of speech. It is something written deep in the western soul and psyche, and something I cherish as an Englishman. It is something I did not even know I cared about until I came to China.

It is true one cannot shout 'fire!' in a crowded theater and so it must also be true that no freedom of speech can ever be absolute. Each society and its government therefore chooses its own limits. Here in China, as everyone knows, those limits are far more stringent than in the West.

Maybe I am just a crazy Westerner, but I find it easy to tolerate an insulting T-shirt. Bombs — now they upset me.



Take it off!

Issue 109



Is it Safe?

By Su Wei

Wang Kai is one of a growing number of security guards in Beijing who has found himself the subject of criminal proceedings. He was sentenced to two years in prison this August after putting out a fire on a bus. This might sound harsh, except it was him who started the fire. "My wages were just a few hundred yuan per month," he said. "One of my company's policies was that security guards who were brave and put out a fire would be given some cash reward. It would be a quick and easy way for me to get some money."

From July last year to July this year, 41 cases involving 50 security guards charged with committing crimes have been handled by Haidian People's Procuratorate. The number is nearly as high as the total number of such cases for the whole of Beijing from 1999 to 2000.

In Beijing, the number of security guards has been rising by nearly 400 per month since 2000 and has reached around 60,000.

Most of the 50 security guards dealt with by Haidian People's Procuratorate were from rural areas such as Hebei, Henan and Shandong.

Last December, a cleaner in Tongzhou District was beaten to death by two security guards with beer bottles and an iron stick while on his way home. The two parking lot security guards, Chen Hua and Wu Jian, told police it was merely because they had nothing to do to kill time.

ing to do to kill time.

In July this year, forty different stories about security guards beating people were reported in major Beijing newspapers. The reasons for these accidents were almost always the same: disputes about entry cards being shown when residents returned, taxis driving into living communities and car parking.

In October 2001, Dai Dahong, a migrant worker, was beaten to death by security guards of Wumei Market, Huixin Xijie after being caught stealing chewing gum. Eleven security guards involved were detained by local police.

A security guard in a supermarket near Renmin University told *Beijing Today*, "If we miss any suspicious person and some goods are lost, we can be fined between several hundred and thousand yuan." Eight of the theft cases handled by Haidian People's Procuratorate related to security guards taking advantage of their jobs to commit theft themselves or conspiring with others.

Zhuang Xiaojing of Haidian People's Procuratorate says security guards commit crimes because it's easy for them to find another job. "They are usually non-Beijingers and are temporarily employed. So mobility is not a problem," he said. "Security guard management companies, organizations hiring these security guards and even police do not care where they come from or what their experience is."

Issue 123

Part Time Lovers

By Dong Nan

More than a quarter of married couples in China are passing up lovemaking, mainly in order to focus on their careers. According to a survey run by Pan Suiming, a sexologist at Renmin University, 28.7% of Chinese couples aged between 20 and 64 make love once a month or less in an average year; for 6.2% it's once a year. According to Pan's report, many young couples around 30 years old believe their careers are at the most crucial stage, so they pay more attention to their job than family life.

Couples above 50 years old are a large segment of those in non-sexual relationships.

Pan's survey reveals Chinese men have sexual intercourse for the first time at 23.3 years old on average. They then have sex once a month, on average, until they're 43.9 years old. Apparently, male sexual activity tends to tail off at the age of 55.9. In another words, they have just over 30 years of sexual activity.

Chinese women have even less time. They have their first sexual experience at 22.12 years on average, but it all peters out at 52.48 years old. According to Pan's survey, nearly one half of women under 40 years old do not know where their clitoris is, and the number is two thirds among women above 40 years old. The survey also points out men who had sexual intercourse in the last week had an average salary of 1,369 yuan per month, and men who had had no action in a year had an average salary of less than 770 yuan a month. But Pan doesn't take development of economy as the major solution.

"I think the culprit for non-sexual relationships is the absence of love and the lack of sex education," he says.

Issue 120

Stamp Forgery Rampant

By Liu Yuan/Ema Ma

Almost all of the different kinds of stamps issued by China's State Post Bureau (SPB), whether precious collectibles or just for daily use, are currently available on the black market. An Ding, deputy director of the Industry Regulation Department of the SPB, revealed there has been a number of forgery cases detected in Liaoning, Sichuan, Zhejiang, Henan, Shanxi and Hebei in recent years.

The biggest case last year in Chongqing, Sichuan Province uncovered over 3,000 kinds of counterfeit stamps with a total value of 160 million yuan.

Last October, a joint action by police and Dalian's post bureau in Liaoning Province unearthed a counterfeiting gang who had been selling stamps in Shanghai, Liaoning and several other provinces. Among the things they found were 11 commemorative stamps worth a total of eight million yuan.

"This is getting out of hand. If forgery can not be curbed, the flooding of counterfeit stamps onto the market will disrupt the whole mailing system," said An.

While cracking down on forgery production lines, there is also the problem of "recycled stamps". Police recently traced a man who was advertising "reconditioned" used stamps in Tongxiang, Zhejiang Province. He offered "a new stamp in exchange for three used envelopes; must be at least 1,000 envelopes."

"Students also recycle stamps," An said. Stamps covered with glue can be reused by the receivers after clearing off the postmark with an eraser. Another trick used by students is covering the stamps with transparent adhesive tape. The postmark is sealed on the tape which can then be torn off.

"The laws are not easy to enforce. Because the users of counterfeit stamps are mainly scattered peasant workers, small companies and students, it's often difficult to find these people," An said. "But some measures can be taken. In addition to adding counterfeit-proof features to stamps issued in the future, we have strengthened supervision procedures."

Issue 104

Risky Business

By Su Wei

The first thing Zhang Zihua wanted to do after he got out of the mine was go and have a drink. He was a survivor in the Jixi mining accident in Heilongjiang on June 20 last year which killed 124 people. He raised a toast to his colleagues. "Those drinking with me today may not survive tomorrow," he said. "There will always be fatal accidents in this industry." Unfortunately, recent evidence indicates that the number of accidents is rising fast.

Statistics from the State Safety Production Monitoring and Management Bureau show that last year 14,900 people died in mining accidents. The number is expected to be higher this year. In the first three months this year there were 36 mining accidents – each of which claimed the lives of between 10 and 29 people – four more than in the same period last year.

"We are treated better in this coal mine than in others," Zhang said. "In some coal mines, people are required to sign an agreement saying the company bears no responsibility for death caused by accidents. But in this mine, if a man dies, his family can receive compensation of up to 30,000 yuan. That's a large amount for these families."

Chen Sanshan, a survivor of a



A lucky survivor is helped clear.

mining accident in Shanxi on September 13, 2001, says, "Life as a miner is 10 times better than being a peasant back at home. The money I earn here in a year is the same as what I would get for six years work at home," he says. His wage is paid day by day, amounting to around 1,000 to 1,500 yuan per month. "I don't see any reason to change my job," he says.

Wu Yun, 28, whose husband died three years ago in a mining accident in Guangxi, says there is a saying in her hometown in Jinzhou, Hubei Province. "Dying in an accident is better than dying of hunger," she says. "Dying in accidents is avoidable and accidental. But dying of hunger if you've got no food is inevitable."

Migrant Children and the City

By Su Wei

Lili, 9, has long wondered what the difference was between her and her classmates. Like them, she was born and grew up in Beijing; she wears the same uniform and learns the same subjects with the same teachers. "But we are different," she told *Beijing Today*. "They

are Beijing children. I am a migrant child."

Her parents, from Heilongjiang, are called migrant workers even though they have been running a cloth-making store in Haidian District for over ten years.

In Beijing there are around 420,000 children of migrant parents. The cheap houses that migrant families live in are usually dilapidated, dark and wet. They often have asbestos roof tiles, mak-

ing them cold in winter and hot in summer. Although 77 percent of the migrant children surveyed live in houses like his, around 10 percent live in basements and just over four percent live in places which can only be described as shelters.

Over 72 percent of the children surveyed study in state schools. Around 22 percent study in schools specially for migrant children. These ones are cheaper and usually charge

each student between 300 and 400 yuan per school term, but parents don't think they're as good.

In state schools there are a variety of extra fees that migrant families often have to pay for their children to be accepted. "Every year, we have to hand in an extra fee of several thousand yuan for the school to accept our son," said Li Yufen, a migrant mother with a 10-year-old son in a public school in Changping District.

Issue 113

It's So Expensive Here!

By Sun Ming

A new survey measuring the cost of living in cities around the world has found that Beijing is the world's fifth most expensive city, pricier than New York which comes in tenth. It was released by Mercer Human Resource Consulting, an American-based group, one of the largest consulting firms in the world, on June 16. It covers 144 cities and measures the comparative cost of over 200 products and services in each location. These include food, alcohol, utilities, clothing, household goods, transport, sport and entertainment.

The survey says Tokyo has replaced Hong Kong as the world's most expensive city and Asia is now the most expensive region with five of its cities in the top ten places in the survey. The Mercer index uses New York as the base city with 100 points. Against that, Tokyo scored

126.1 points. Osaka takes third position (112.2) followed by Hong Kong (111.6) and Beijing (105.1). Shanghai (98.4) is ranked 11th. Asuncion in Paraguay, which has an index of 36.5 points, has replaced Johannesburg as the least expensive city in the survey.

According to Zhang Shidong, the global information survey practice leader with Mercer Human Resource Consulting China, getting around in Beijing is far more expensive than in New York. "Transportation in the survey mainly covers car prices, including buying cars or renting cars," Zhang said.

"Mercer collects golf and tennis expenses in the questionnaire. Golf is a very popular sport in America which most professionals can afford. But in China, like Japan and Korea, the price is extremely high," says Zhang. "And tennis is not exactly cheap in Beijing."

It is also costly to go to the gym or fitness center in Beijing. And movie tickets, international newspapers and



"Golf is a very popular sport in America which most professionals can afford. But in China, like Japan and Korea, the price is extremely high; it is just for elites."

magazines are also expensive.

The prices of electronic appliances in Beijing are also higher than in New York, as expatriates who prefer to buy imported brands will know. "Considering that most of the

foreign workers in Beijing are from developed countries, when choosing samples in Beijing, we mainly chose international brands or medium and high-grade services in the city," said Zhang.

Issue 112



12 Square Meters by Zhang Huan

How Free Can Art Be?

By Iris Miao

Avant-garde performance art is often aimed at getting a rise out of its audience, but the organizers of the Guangzhou Triennial show in late 2002 must have had no idea as to how offended one young man from the art field would be. Su Jian, a teacher at the Guangzhou Academy of Fine Art, was so disturbed by two works he called “pornographic” and “obscene” that he filed a lawsuit against the Guangdong Provincial Gallery in February, seeking 20,000 in compensation for damage to his physical and spiritual health, a refund of the 30 yuan ticket and a public apology.

After Su lost his first lawsuit, he filed another with the Guangzhou Intermediate People's Court on July 2, 2003. The cases were the first of their kind in this country and raised questions not only about the works on trial, but also about performance art as a whole.

The show that sparked the suits was the first Guangzhou Triennial, run with the theme of “Re-contemplate: A Decade's Experimental Art in China (1990-2000)”. The two-month show drew around 80,000 visitors and was hailed by the *New York Times* as an “epoch-making exhibition”. The two works under legal scrutiny, *12 Square Meters* by performance artist Zhang Huan, and the video performance work *In the Bathroom* by female artist Cui Xiuwen of Beijing, were displayed constantly on screens of the exhibition hall. In *12 Square Meters*, Zhang Huan daubed his body with honey to attract flies to cover him head to toe. While some scorned the piece, Zhang's work has appeared many places as an example of cutting-edge experimental art in China.

For *In the Bathroom*, completed in 1999, Cui Xiuwen took a video camera into the women's bathroom of a luxurious nightclub in Beijing. “Cui is a very serious artist and her work indicates that human beings have devolved. It is a piece with real social significance,” said curator Huang Du.

The controversial case was a new chapter in the trials and tribulations of modern Chinese art, as performance art remains generally misunderstood by the public while increasing numbers of domestic artists participate in first-class contemporary art shows around the world, such as the Venice Biennale. Li Gongming, art history professor at the Zhuangzhou Academy of Fine Art speculated that one lawsuit would not be enough to stem that tide or to otherwise interfere in artistic creation or the trend of development in performance art in China. (Issue 113)

Alors, La Chine?

By Iris Miao / Xiao Hang

In 1974, having taken a three-week carefully guided tour of China, French semiotic theorist Roland Barthes described this country as “flat” and “not colorful” in his *Alors, la Chine?* Of course what he witnessed was China in the last throes of the Cultural Revolution, four years before the era of reform and opening was launched by Deng Xiaoping.

A exhibition of contemporary Chinese art, which took its name directly from that book and kicked off on October 13 in Parisi Centre Pompidou, was aimed squarely at refuting Barthes' dated judgments and presenting the new face of a dynamic, opening China to the French people. It was the first collective Chinese contemporary art show to be held in this avant-garde art center and the initial event in the China-France Culture Year program, which will continue until this July.

The prominent names involved and the nearly 10 million yuan



I love Beijing by Lu Hao

in total expenses made the four-month show “the largest and most profound in structure of any external exhibition of Chinese art in history,” according to Fan Di'an, the show's curator and deputy dean of the Central Academy of Fine Arts.

The sprawling exhibition hall was given an open design and filled with a range of paintings, sculptures, photographs, installa-

tion works, videos, movies, multimedia creations and musical works by such famous figures as Wang Guangyi, Zhang Yonghe and Zhang Yimou.

“The profound reality of China's changing society and the development of traditional Chinese culture have enabled contemporary Chinese artists to do far more than simply copy Western

art,” said Fan. “It is no exaggeration to say that contemporary Chinese art is qualified to engage in equal dialogue with the international art world regarding contemporary concepts.”

At the center of the exhibition was artist Lu Hao's immense model of the Chinese capital, titled *I Love Beijing*, which represents the disappearance of the ancient parts of the city.

Conspicuous space in the hall was also given to three ancient treasures, a Neolithic jade cong (c.3,300–2,000 BC), a bronze mirror from the Western Han Dynasty (206 BC–24 AD), and a calligraphy work by Zhu Yunming, a Ming Dynasty (1368–1644) master, to provide background and perspective for understanding modern China.

Chief French curator Alfred Pacquement said that Barthes' book *Alors, la Chine?* influenced French perception of China and hoped the exhibition would show audiences a “truer China” greatly changed since the troubled times of the Cultural Revolution.

(Issue 110)

By Darlene Lee

With an impressive array of international art events being held in the capital in the extended run-up to the 2008 Olympics, an increasing number of foreign artists are calling Beijing home.

Lisa Norton, associate professor at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, said, “I love Beijing. It's so elegant and beautiful with a strong sense of history while being chaotic at the same time.”

She continued, “The artwork here is the best kept secret in the art world: the quality, the integrity and the power. It's not fully understood externally in its own context and I hope to help bridge that gap when I get home.”

In 1998, German Elahiu von Erlénbach became the first foreign conductor to move to China. Now wielding the baton for the Beijing Symphony Orchestra, he is also Cultural Ambassador for Tianjin among other positions. He said, “I love the spontaneity of the people in Beijing, there's so much feeling. It's my luck that destiny brought me to China.”

After first coming to China as a student in 1993, Katharina Schneider-Roos from Scheibbs, Austria returned in 2001 to teach at Beijing National University. She teamed up with German Solveig Klassen to make *My Camera Doesn't Lie* in 2003, a documentary of the independent film industry which has toured film festivals in Berlin, Los Angeles, Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea and Vienna.

She said, “The increasing relaxation of censorship has opened up a new way for artists to have public access and recognition, so it's a very exciting time in China's film industry since these people will be giving the existing film system a new energy with new perspectives and subjects.”

Australian Brian Wallace, owner and manager of the successful Red Gate Gallery, set up the capital's first private sector artist residency program ten years ago. The program has since hosted over 50 international artists, including Brit Michael Lyons, who has won awards for work completed during a Red Gate residency.

“Like other places in Asia, it will take time for the local establishment to accept that foreigners can play a constructive part in the arts establishment, not just on the fringe,” Wallace noted. “Beijing has great resources but needs to seek input at all levels of the art world. It is happening slowly but could benefit from a sustained booster.”

Issue 131



Bridging the Social Gap

By Yu Shanshan

The millions of migrants moving from poor rural towns to urban centers in China have created new communities in these cities with their own fleeting cultures. At the same time, these transient groups have encountered many problems and put pressure on city governments. This complex phenomenon inspired the art on show at the *Together With Migrants – Comrade Mingong Contemporary Art Exhibition*, held November 22 to 30 at the Today Art Gallery.

Part of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)'s four-year research-action project “Together With Migrants”, launched in February 2002, the exhibition presented photographs, sculptures, video and installation works by 15 Chinese artists.

“This is more than an art exhibition,” said curator Yang Xinyi, “it's the first time for the UN, academic institutes, artists a private gallery to all pay attention to and take action about the social issue of *mingong* (migrant workers).”

Sculptor Liang Shuo's well known life-like fiberglass sculptures series *Fashionable Peasants: Eight Brothers and Migrant Workers in the City* evocatively show the humanity in the anonymous faces of the millions of Chinese migrant workers. Photographer Xing Danwen recorded migrant workers constructing Beijing's National Theatre, showing their importance to the capital's dynamism, while Yang Yong's photographs put more emphasis on the feelings of change, loss and hope at the heart of migrant communities.

The real highlight of the show was Song Dong's performance art *Together with Migrants* on the opening day. He employed 200 migrant workers, promising them 30 yuan each and a warm lunch, and then stood them in groups around the gallery's elevator, stairs, hallway and entrance, and had 64 walk bare-chested through the audience (see photo above).

“I wanted to remind people that mingong have permeated every corner of urban life and we can't simply avoid or ignore them,” Song explained.

Reaction was mixed. Critic Chen Lusheng opined, “This sets a new low for works of artists playing with poor people. The employer-employee relationship between the artist and the workers in fact reveals how the workers are not able to control their own lives. They were sent to do the job by their construction foreman.”

Yet Wen Pulin, director of the Dongtai Academy of Arts, one of the organizers of the show, said the participants “fulfilled the artist's responsibility, which is to tell people, ‘Pay attention to this!’”

Issue 132

By Yu Shanshan

A slightly out-of-way yet beautifully decorated theatre on the third floor of Qiantie Cinema, built over a century ago as China's first railway station, has returned to life since early November 2003 when it was transformed into the Old Station Theatre. This ambitious theater is home to nearly 30 young, professional actors, including director Fei Henan, determined to revive authentic Peking Opera.

Dismayed by limited performing opportunities and the degeneration of their art into stunted performances for mostly foreign tourists, Fei, 25, and some of his colleagues at the prominent Beijing Opera Theater decided to set up a troupe to perform full versions of opera classics.

On the theater's opening night on November 8, they performed a full version of the two-hour-long classic *Si Lang Tan Mu* (*Silang Visits His Mother*). Such authenticity comes at a sacrifice of financial success, however, as tour agencies demand that shows be limited to less than one hour.

Young Actors Reviving Peking Opera Tradition

Du Peijun, the theater's planning director and Fei's girlfriend, said that they struggled at first get capital, but finally sold the idea to three investors. Through personal connections, Fei is able to rent the venue for free, save electricity and water payments, but money is still a problem.

However, financial stress has not had kept fine actors from giving solid performances on the Old Station Theater's stage. Fei noted, “People are surprised to see how seriously the people in our theater take their roles and that's because they all know this kind of chance is not easy to come by.”

So far, audiences tend to be made up of older opera fans and some university students. Fei realized early on that drawing more younger viewers would require finding a way to give them information explaining the now unfamiliar stories and obscure words. A creative solu-



Actor Li Yang puts on his make-up in the Old Station Theatre.

tion to the problem was found by inviting a traditional storyteller, or *pingshu*, to introduce the plots of operas before the curtains go up.

One elderly couple from Shanghai, who attended a performance on the theater's second weekend, told Du that they thought the acting was superb, it was just a shame the audience was so small.

Such praise is one of the reasons Fei, Du and the other members of the troupe at the Old Station Theater are determined to soldier on. Fei said, “With so many talented young people here working together towards the goal of rejuvenating Peking opera, how could we not succeed?”

Issue 130

Opening the Door to the Opium Kingdom

By Zhang Huan

Han Yunfeng has been paying close attention to opium production in the Golden Triangle since 1994. The films he has recorded not only show the changes of the opium economy in the Golden Triangle, but more importantly, help the outside world come to a better knowledge of poppy growers' lives in the Wa state, an armed opium production tribe in the Golden Triangle.

In 1997, Han took his digital video camera to the border area of China and Laos and began recording the stories of two cousins, Ai Lun and Ai Mai. Ai Lun, the elder cousin, has a stable life in South China's Yunnan province, planting rice and sugarcane. Ai Mai plants poppies in Laos and leads a much poorer life with an annual income of less than 1,000 yuan. Han was shocked by the huge contrast because he had never realized that the income from growing pop-



pies was actually less than that from planting sugarcane.

In the past few years, Han's major work has been document-

ing and publicizing the efforts of Chairman Bao, leader of the Wa state, who claims to have been trying to eradicate opium produc-

tion. Despite international scepticism, Bao says he wants to cease all opium production in the state by 2005 and to move its economy

to crops such as rice, corn and sugarcane. Aware of the doubts from the outside world, Han is determined to use his camera to defend Bao, with whom he has developed a deep friendship.

In 2000, Han recorded a relocation project launched by Bao to move the poppy planters from the northern hill areas to the plains near the border of Burma and Thailand, where the climate and soil are suitable for rice and corn as well as poppies. Despite claims that the real purpose of Bao's project was to extend the reach of his drug empire to strategic border territories, Han believes Bao had no choice but to move the people so they could learn to grow rice and corn.

By 1999, Han had recorded more than 200 tapes in the Golden Triangle. His tapes were later used by Bill Kurtis, a famous US documentary producer, in his investigative documentary titled "Warlord," which brought the world's attention to the real life of the Wa people and Bao's plan to eradicate opium production.

Issue 94



Death-Defying Discoverer

By Zhao Pu

Try to imagine a geographical version of Indiana Jones and you'd probably come up with someone a bit like Liu Shaohuang. He's battled freezing temperatures, man-eating polar bears and forged new territory in exploration.

As a researcher with the Institute of Remote Sensing Applications (IRSA), part of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, Liu has made a number of solo expeditions to the North Pole and sources of the principal rivers of China in the past few years.

Last February, Liu set out on a solo Arctic trip, his mission to walk unaided to the North Pole. He overcame the dangers of freezing, drowning and being eaten by polar bears. He also had to get from latitude 81 to 83 degrees north.

On April 27, Liu arrived at the North Pole. The 39-year-old scientist had become the first Chinese adventurer to complete a solo trek on foot to the North Pole.

Compared with his polar expedition, Liu's trip to the source of the Mekong River in Qinghai Province was obviously less dangerous, though in terms of scientific progress, it was far more important. He pinpointed the exact spot of the river's source, and also calculated the length of the river at 4,909 kilometers using remote sensing satellite technology.

Liu's discovery made headlines around the world last October. "The river is up to 700 kilometers longer than previously calculated in other studies, including those made by the French and British Royal Geographical Societies," said an AFP report.

For Liu, expeditions are an inevitable part of his career. "Mankind learns to know the world from expeditions. It was explorers who discovered the new continents and seas. And thanks to the spirit of exploration, big progress can be made in science and technology," says Liu. "Of course expeditions have dangers, but even riding a bicycle might bring an accident. Everything involves risk. It is important that you realize the looming dangers and find out possible solutions beforehand."

Issue 98



Wanted: Wang Keqin

By Zhao Pu / Zhang Huan

As a journalist, Wang Keqin didn't expect to uncover dark inside stories. It was when Wang was investigating an inside story in the "black" or illegal stock market in Lanzhou (Gansu Province) in 2001 that he gained a taste for investigative journalism.

During his work, Wang risked his own life a number of times and suffered both misery and humiliation, but the determined journalist claims he was simply doing his job. When reporting on the black stock market in Lanzhou, he received a brutal

threat from racketeers who said they would break his legs and skin him alive.

After one report that he published in January 2001, his family received threatening calls, and Wang was informed that a criminal syndicate was offering five million yuan for his head. To ensure the safety of his family, Wang had to send his wife and son out of Gansu just before the Spring Festival. On the traditionally festive eve of the lunar New Year, he ate instant noodles and frozen dumplings alone while revising his report in fear.

What's more, Wang also had to face criticism and opposition

from some government officials who thought Wang's investigations would have a negative influence on the image of Gansu and on foreign investment. It was not until a journalist from Xinhua News Agency wrote an internal report about Wang's stories, followed by praise from the central government, that Wang's hard work was finally recognized.

Apart from his report on the black stock market in Lanzhou, Wang also published "Inside Story of Evil-Doers in Min County (Gansu Province)" and "Monopoly Secrets of the Beijing Taxi Trade."

Issue 116

By Zhao Pu

"People call me 'subway singer,'" says Huang Shan. It seems to be the only true and proper name for him, simple and impersonal which gives him comfort and confidence.

In summer 2000, Huang came to Beijing from his hometown Huangshan (Yellow Mountain) in Anhui province, and began to perform in the subway. In the past two and a half years, he has become a regular part of the subway scene and has made a name in this underground community. The happiest thing for him is making a lot of new friends with the people who like his music.

Poloarts found him in his subway in 2001, and offered him a contract in 2002. Many people say Huang is lucky to win the favor of a famous entertainment company, which is still a dream

Subway Superstar

for most other fringe singers scattered among the numerous subways in the city.

But involvement with Poloarts has made little difference to the rhythm of Huang's daily life. He still cherishes his commitment to his audience in the subway. "I give people instant inspiration and pleasure in the subway," he proudly declares. And that, he says, is his best way of communication with his audience.

Huang's real fanbase are the people who live nearby and walk through the subway regularly. They usually greet him with a smile and sometimes they will also have a small chat with him. But few of them know he used to be a doctor in a hospital in his hometown, and that he left



a safe and peaceful lifestyle behind, to pursue the "ideal and pure" life he has now.

After graduation, Huang joined a big hospital in his hometown. "The work there was very easy. I worked only several hours per day, and the salary was sat-

isfying," he says. "But that kind of safe and leisurely life was not for me. To me, it seemed like a waste of my life living like that."

Huang came to Beijing in 1997 to take part in a national singer contest. Though it didn't

bring him a prize, it brought the idea of a new lifestyle. Huang came back to Beijing in 2000 and decided to sing in a subway. "I wish to touch other people with my songs, at the same time as making a living by singing," he planned.

Huang says he liked the feeling that everybody was looking at him but that nobody knew who he was, in this big city. "When they introduce me, they just call me 'subway singer'. I like this title," he says.

Several papers were interested in his story and interviewed him. But few published his story. "They wanted to write a sad and sentimental story about a vagrant singer, and were mostly disappointed when they found I was happy and contented with my life," he smiles.

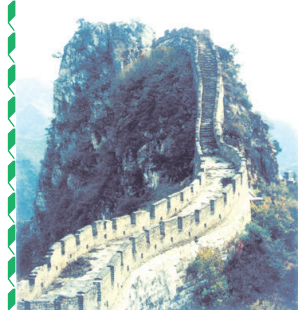
Issue 87

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Your AIDS Story Touched Me

I was having my holidays in Beijing and came across *Beijing Today* at one of the subway stations.

I was delighted to read an English language paper, as it is a medium that I was familiar with. The articles made my stay in Beijing more meaningful.

I read with a heavy heart the article on the orphanage in Henan, how a man with AIDS has adopted 53 children orphaned by this epidemic in his village. I emailed the editor from *Beijing Today* to find out more about this man and his village, with a slim hope that the editor would reply.

To my amazement, he did. Not only did the editor provide me with the details of the place, he even volunteered to accompany me to the village! Kudos to the team in *Beijing Today* for their professionalism!

From *Beijing Today*, I also found out about the exhibitions of the National Geographic Society and the Roman and Egyptian Civilizations. I visited all of them.

As a tourist, not only was I exploring the city's sights and sounds, I was also looking for opportunities to involve myself with the local communities. I hope *Beijing Today* can do more pieces on what the local people are doing, and how foreigners like myself could be able to participate.

Thanks to *Beijing Today*, my stay in Beijing was certainly more colorful.

Jenny Ong, 30, is from Singapore. She was staying in Beijing from 11 - 30 December 2003.



Beijing Feels Good Today

In August 2003, a friend of mine who works for *Beijing Today* asked me to comment on raising pets. After the paper came out, she sent me several issues. It was the first time I read the paper. I found it was the best way to learn about what is happening in Beijing.

Quite by accident, another friend of mine asked whether I had had anything to do with animal protection because they found the article on the internet. This was when I learned I could read *Beijing Today* on the internet. Since then, I have been reading *Beijing Today* online in Holland.

I believe *Beijing Today* is one of the papers that are good for your mental health. People can select nearly all topics they want to read. While reading the paper, you can always feel Beijing feels good today.

Ferry van de Pavert, 57, is a private doctor in Hilversum, Holland.



Wish for Peace

The first time I came across *Beijing Today* was at the "International Academic Conference in Commemoration of the 850th Anniversary of Beijing as the Capital of China" held at the Beijing Conference Center on September 22 this year.

I was attracted by the in-depth reports in *Beijing Today*, and started subscribing from October this year. I also cancelled my subscription to a rival publication.

To me, the more articles there are about Beijing, the better. Foreigners living in this city cannot obtain sufficient local news. I have subscribed to three local newspapers in Chinese. I can always find useful articles in the Chinese newspapers, and believe these stories should be published in English, because expats in Beijing want to know this information too.

I hope for peace in the new year, and no recurrence of the SARS epidemic. At least SARS taught us to help each other and to develop community spirit.

Virginia Fumiyo Anami is the wife of the Japanese Ambassador to China. She held a photo exhibition focused on the villages around *Beijing* and their fragility with three other photographers last November.



I Need BT for Morning Coffee

I have been a loyal reader of *Beijing Today* ever since its very first issue. Is it Friday? Good - I need to have my BT issue for morning coffee.

My first personal contact with BT was before the 2002 Spring Festival. Just imagine - I open the paper and see my own photo on the front page! The week before I had attended the activity organized by the Chinese Culture Club - foreigners writing *chun lian*, auspicious wishes for the upcoming holiday - where the photo was taken. I contacted *Beijing Today* as I wanted to have more copies to send home to my family and friends.

Later I was invited to give my opinions regularly on certain topics for the "Voice" page.

What do I like about the newspaper? It is different from other English language media in China. Not too official but eye catching, really informative and interesting. It's a pity that it is only weekly, not a daily newspaper - sometimes when it comes out, many stories are actually not in the news anymore.

I really appreciate that BT isn't afraid to tell stories of shortcomings and problems in China. It doesn't think about 'losing face' - good job, guys! Actually when you are able to discuss problems and the ways to solve them, it is a sign of maturity.

Inesa Pleskacheuskaya is the *Beijing* bureau chief of "Belarus Today" (aka "Sovetskaya Belorussia") newspaper and Belarus National TV.

She is also the author of "The Country Under Heaven", a book about China.



To Be with You

I was still a freshman at Beijing International Studies University when I first came across *Beijing Today* at a news kiosk. It was in the summer of 2001, several months after the paper was launched. I was attracted by the fashionable design and in-depth reports. After that, I became a faithful reader.

At that time, the content of *China Daily* was too difficult for me, while the English in *21st Century* was too simple, not suitable for a language student like me. Only *Beijing Today* introduces the traditional culture and relics of Beijing in English. I enjoyed reading it immediately and introduced it to my classmates.

This summer, I became interested in rock music. To my surprise, *Beijing Today* started a new column titled "Rock Review". I wrote an article introducing Wan Xiaoli, a ballad singer, and emailed it to the editor. It was published soon after. Encouraged by the little achievement, I wrote more stories on another two Chinese bands.

Unfortunately, *Beijing Today* does not advertise itself enough. Many people only know *China Daily*. Also, maybe the columns in the paper should be thinner, more like those in foreign newspapers, such as *USA Today*. Sometimes the quality of printing isn't so good, because printing ink often damages the paper.

Beijing Today is such a good newspaper I hope it can be published twice a week.

Wang Yao is now a third-year university student and a contributor to *Beijing Today*



The Young Reporter Is from a Young Newspaper

I still remember the first time when *Beijing Today* contacted me.

It was before the Spring Festival of 2002 when a journalist from *Beijing Today* called me, requesting an interview with Igor Rogachev, our ambassador. But the ambassador was extremely busy. However, the reporter was so persistent, I told the ambassador that the young journalist was from a young newspaper. That persuaded him.

We have subscribed to a variety of official newspapers such as *People's Daily* and *Guangming Daily*. We will also subscribe to *Beijing Today* this year. I have got used to looking through *Beijing Today* whenever I have it in my office. I like the newspaper as it is interesting and has a lot of useful information, such as culture, relics and sightseeing.

More addresses and directions to get to some sightseeing places might be provided. Sometimes I can only find English names for some places. It would be better if their Chinese names were given as it is too difficult to find a place in China without its Chinese name.

I wish happiness and prosperity for all *Beijing Today's* readers in the coming new year and the spring festival.

Yuri Metelev is counselor of cultural and educational affairs of the Embassy of the Russian Federation to China.



It Deserves a Larger Readership

After relocating to Beijing in March 2002 to paint full-time, I read everything I could find in English to stay informed. Upon finding *Beijing Today* at the news stand inside Jianguomen subway station, I was delighted: nice layout, decent writing, interesting topics and so much better than the other stuff I'd waded through. I told all my friends about it while reading it regularly myself.

Meanwhile, I had started writing about the contemporary art scene in Beijing for various publications. *Beijing Today* is one of them.

After contributing regularly for a few months, Ian Provan from *Beijing Today* called to ask if I'd be interested in being a "polisher" while he went home to Australia for Christmas. A few weeks later, I found myself sitting in a cubicle on the 18th floor of the *Beijing Youth Daily* building looking over newspaper proofs. What I discovered in the office was a young, energetic and remarkably dedicated team of people working many long nights to bring out *Beijing Today* every week.

Constantly improving and raising its standards, *Beijing Today* will certainly continue to do so in 2004. It deserves a much larger readership than it currently has. It's been great fun working with *Beijing Today* and I'm looking forward to more collaboration in the new year.

Darlene Lee is an American-born artist living in Beijing.

Your Paper Is Reliable, People Buy It

I opened a news stand at Oriental Plaza two years ago. Aside from the Chinese publications, only two English newspapers are available at my booth: *Beijing Weekend* and *Beijing Today*.

I can sell 15 copies of *Beijing Today* every week. I used to sell *21st Century* (another English weekly run by *China Daily*). But only a few copies were bought so I stopped selling it.

I can't read English. But I can see *Beijing Today* is warmly received by my customers, especially in the tourism seasons, because I usually ask for five more copies to sell. Seldom do I have to return *Beijing Today* to the distributor. As it is published every Friday, usually the last issue of *Beijing Today* at my booth is sold by the next Tuesday.

People think your newspaper is more reliable than Chinese tabloids such as *Beijing Times* and *Beijing Star Daily*. Especially when big events happen, people like to read *Beijing Today* because they think the contents are true to the facts.

But the size of *Beijing Today* is a problem for readers. If you fully open the paper, you have to stretch your arms wide, which is inconvenient. If the paper could be smaller, the same size as *Beijing Weekend*, I might sell more.

The price is not a problem. Only a few people can write news in English. Thus the two yuan price is reasonable.

Luo Jingli is the owner of an underground newspaper kiosk at Oriental Plaza.

New Long Marchers Come Home

By Xiao Rong

Back in the autumn of 2002, when they officially informed *Beijing Today* staff of their ambitious plan to retrace the entire route of the original Long March of the Chinese Red Army, nobody took it seriously. But finally, on November 3, 2003, their dream came true.

Starting on October 16, 2002 from Yudu, Jiangxi Province, Andrew McEwen and Ed Jocelyn crossed ten provinces and autonomous regions, becoming the first foreigners to tread this route since Otto Braun, the German military advisor who accompanied the original Long Marchers.

To the whole world, they are New Long Marchers who became famous overnight for their 384-day trek. But for *Beijing Today*, the duo are old friends who have witnessed the growth of the city's first English language newspaper.

Both worked as polishers before for several English publications in Beijing, and the two Englishmen begun their special attachment to *Beijing Today* in 2001 when McEwen became a polisher for us and Jocelyn gave a hand to *Village News*, a daily tabloid for the 21st Universiade run by *Beijing Today* in August, 2001.

"This office seemed to me to contain the best and the brightest of China, a microcosm if you will for its future," said McEwen, adding that it was a unique chance for him as a foreigner to work alongside progressive and open-minded Chinese journalists.

Due to the New Long March, McEwen's work with *Beijing Today* halted in September, 2002. But the pair's connection with the paper continued throughout their trek, during which they have been contributing exclusive column stories for the paper. *Beijing Today* has also been chasing for their march stories,



Andrew McEwen (left) and Ed Jocelyn on their New Long March

especially when they set out and when they finished the journey.

After over one year of absence from Beijing, they are both struck by the city's great changes, as well as the speed at which their favorite old places have been disappearing.

"I am delighted to see train lines being built, transport infrastructure being constructed for commuters and so on," said McEwen. "Maybe we need to think even further ahead and introduce night buses like London. Or a 24-hour subway, like New York."

Despite his love for progress and development, McEwen still expressed his hopes that the city could benefit more from tourist dollars.

For the new year, Jocelyn hopes that *Beijing Today* can continue to develop into an important source of information on the city, setting an example for other newspapers in Beijing to follow by doing

a better job introducing and explaining the life of Beijing.

McEwen appreciates the effort of most *Beijing Today* staff members in constantly striving to go one step further than Chinglish and yearn for real exchange, which he thinks will make the paper succeed.

"At *Beijing Today*, there are many staff members willing to go that extra mile into English. They know first hand how Chinglish doesn't help you to understand foreigners, our culture or our way of thinking," McEwen said.

With the aim of studying and documenting the living history along the route of the Long March, the two have met 11 Long March veterans and interviewed 107 witnesses of the march, compiling two notebooks of diaries and over 20,000 photographs. So the most urgent thing for the duo in 2004 is to prepare for the New Long March photo exhibition.



(Right) Peter with Dandong primary school students in Denmark, 1999

By Shan Jinliang

Niels Peter Arskog has been emotionally and financially burned by his time in China but he scoffs at any notion of returning home to Denmark. His fantasy of coming to live in China began when he was a six-year-old boy, living in the hometown of Hans Christian Andersen. It took him more than forty years to achieve this dream but now that he's here, not even a disastrous marriage with a Chinese woman, a painful divorce and near bankruptcy has put him off.

Born in Denmark in 1945, Peter is now a freelance journalist in Beijing, working mainly for the Danish and Icelandic media. He's struggling to make ends meet at the moment having been taken for virtually every dime by his former wife in the divorce court. And as if that's not enough, he's trying to fight off increasing problems with his lungs. His Christmas, spent quietly with some Chinese friends, was interrupted by a visit to Chaoyang Hospital for treatment. This cost him almost 4,000 yuan and he was forced to borrow the money from a Chinese friend.

Peter never complains about his life, and attributes his health problems to years of smoking rather than any emotional distress. When his first marriage ended back in Denmark after 20 years, he decided to try two things he'd always wanted to do. One was to take up smoking, and the other was coming to China.

A dream of China

Peter's father worked for the Salvation Army (a Christian charitable organization) all his life. When Peter was six years old, he met one of his father's friends, a missionary who told vivid tales of his life in China before 1949, as well as praising Chinese people's kindness. The missionary had been helping poor Chinese people for more than 20 years but had to leave the country after the founding of the People's Republic of China. Peter started to dream of becoming a doctor and also going to work in China.

However, as he grew up he found himself drawn to journalism instead. At 15 and while still at high school, he started a monthly magazine for teenagers. This made him officially the youngest editor-in-chief in Denmark, albeit partly because the country's media was fairly small and undeveloped at the time. The magazine became popular nationwide but it never made any profit and Peter had to shut it down when at 18 he got an apprenticeship as a journalist working for



Still Following the Fairy Tale



Peter typewriting at 15, as the youngest editor-in-chief in Denmark

Peter still believes Chinese people are very kind and that his misfortune was simply to have met the "wrong" Chinese girl.. "I want a third marriage but not a third divorce."

Peter in Tian'anmen Square, 1999



a daily newspaper. Peter gradually started working for a number of Danish newspapers, radio and TV stations. He married a Danish girl in 1968. The childhood dream of going to China was forgotten and buried for almost 30 years.

Things started to change in the 1980s, as his work became increasingly busy. There was only one national state-owned TV channel and three radio channels in country, and the growing trade union movement was clamoring for a new voice. Peter began working to broadcast their message as widely as he could, both in writing and helping establish new private radio and TV stations.

This meant long periods of traveling and time away from the family. In a typical month he would stay with his family for only three or four days. In addition to his role as an adviser and consultant for various local radio and TV stations, in 1985 he got a top job at City TV, a private TV station in Copenhagen. The pressure led to the breakup of his marriage in 1988. "There are always two parties in a divorce," he told *Beijing Today*, while mentioning his regret at being drawn apart from his wife and two children.

China dream comes true

But after the divorce he remembered the two "desires" he had never been able to indulge: smoking and going to China. He started to smoke a pipe, and began planning how to make his childhood dream of life in China come true.

Financed by *Nordjyske Stiftstidende*, a Danish newspaper, he made his first visit to China in March 1990. During seven weeks Peter visited Beijing, Wuhan, Shanghai, Guangzhou and Shenzhen and experienced a very different China from what he had read about in Danish books and media. He realized how backward

that vision of the country was and how much China had changed. Peter was fascinated by the country and the people he met, so he contrived to come back again and again in the following years to report on China's development. Unlike many western reporters, he focused on the positive aspects of the changes in China, gaining him popularity in media circles here in China. In 1998 he was named vice president of the Foreign Correspondents Club of China. "By nature, I have a positive attitude to everything in life," he says. **Then she walked in**

In 1993, Peter met Kong Qingyan, a Chinese woman 18 years younger than him. Kong began to write letters to him expressing her devotion and she visited him in Denmark.

Though he denies that he was naive about the relationship, Peter says his father taught him to have a trusting attitude towards others. He'd also come to believe Chinese girls were traditional and kind, and normally nervous about getting to know foreigners. So when Kong suggested marriage, Peter had no suspicions about her intentions. Nuptials soon followed and the couple set up their home in Denmark.

At the time, Peter was earning a monthly salary of 35,000 Danish Kroner, higher than most Danish people at that time, but his wife was not satisfied with this. She wanted him to become a businessman to earn more, which was unacceptable to Peter. Soon he started to feel he was being used.

"She had a bad temper," says Peter, "and on more than one occasion she threatened me with a knife."

Peter thought things might be better if the two moved back to China, where Kong had her family and friends, and where he actually wanted

to live and work. So in 1996, after three tumultuous years in Denmark, Peter sold all his property and moved to China permanently.

A nasty shock

In 1997, shortly after having moved to China, Peter heard about some middle school students who were hoping to visit the land of Hans Christian Andersen so he helped finance their visits. This infuriated his wife who wanted him to charge the students and make some money. Peter told *Beijing Today*. Divorce proceedings soon began.

Peter believed in the fairness of the local legal system and expected a fair share of his property, as in any other country. But the court decided he was the culprit and awarded Kong virtually all of the couple's possessions: their house, car, furniture, and even Peter's Danish and Icelandic books. All Peter got was his clothes, some old furniture and some books.

That wasn't the end. In the summer of 2003, Kong's mother sued Peter in Chaoyang District Court. She said her daughter owed her 35,000 yuan and was unable to pay it, so she wanted Peter to pay it instead.

Fortune after misfortune

Fortunately, Peter has been able to rely on sterling support from his Chinese friends, even though they criticized him for being naive. Peter still believes Chinese people are very kind and that his misfortune was simply to have met the "wrong" Chinese girl.. "I want a third marriage but not a third divorce," he says.

His various travails have not dented his spirits too severely. With his long white hair, he dressed up as Santa Claus during the Christmas Season to amuse his friends, and likes to perform songs or recitals of fairy tales. And maybe his luck is beginning to turn. He's just won an air ticket to Europe. The only thing is, does he want to use it?



Still from the TV series, National Treasure

Forbidden City Seeks Return of Missing Treasures

By Bai Lu / Zhao Pu

National Treasure, a new TV series produced by China Central Television unveils a little-known episode of history to the public. The story centers on the transfer of a large quantity of treasures from the Forbidden City to South China for safekeeping in the 1930s.

Although the majority of the treasures were returned long ago, some 2,000 crates of porcelain wares are still in the possession of the Nanjing Museum. Today, the Palace Museum wants them back, but the Nanjing side is reluctant to let them go.

Southern refuge

When Japanese troops invaded north China in 1931, the Kuomintang government decided to move part of the national treasures in the Forbidden City to southern China. From February to May of 1933, more than 10,000 crates of treasures from the Imperial Palace, the Summer Palace, and Guozijian (the Imperial College) were shipped south.

These cultural relics were taken via Shanghai and Nanjing to Sichuan and Guizhou provinces, and were preserved in remote areas such as Leshan, Emei and Anshun. When the Anti-Japanese War ended, they were moved back to Nanjing.

Given the immense value of the relics, the entire operation was carried out in the utmost secrecy, and has ever since been shrouded in mystery.

Negotiation

Deputy director of the Palace Museum Liang Jinsheng told *Beijing Today* last week that there are actually 2,211 crates of treasures from the Forbidden City still kept in the Nanjing Museum. In recent years, he said, the Palace Museum has been negotiating with the Nanjing Museum for their return.

According to Liang, these cultural relics were transported to Shanghai before the Anti-Japanese War, and many specialists in relics preservation were dispatched to Nanjing's Chaotian Palace, where the Nanjing arm of the Palace Museum had been established. When the war erupted in 1937, the



Chaotian Palace in Nanjing Museum, storehouse of these treasures
Photo by Wang Jian

treasures were secretly divided into three groups and transferred to remote areas in Guizhou and Sichuan provinces.

At the end of World War II, the cultural relics were moved back to Chaotian Palace, and during the subsequent War of Liberation, the Kuomintang selected 2,972 crates from the over 13,000 to take to Taiwan. With these cultural relics, Taipei's Palace Museum was established.

After the founding of New China in 1949, many of the relics remaining in Nanjing were returned to the Forbidden City. But during the Cultural Revolution, the work of returning them was suspended.

The Palace Museum signed an agreement with the Cultural Bureau of Jiangsu Province in 1960 stating that the cultural relics belong to the Palace Museum and should be returned.

But when the Palace Museum sent staff to fulfill the agreement in 1979, the Nanjing Museum proposed to take over these treasures eternally. Therefore, the return was again put aside.

In 1987 and 1988, the Palace Museum sent personnel to Nanjing to negotiate on the matter of the return of the treasures, but Nanjing Museum was reluctant to let go the relics it had been

safeguarding for half a century, and no progress was made.

Nanjing Museum pointed out that former director of Palace Museum Wu Zhongchao stated verbally in 1960 that if the cultural relics had not been returned by 1961, they could remain at the Nanjing Museum. The Palace Museum protested and demanded a text testimony.

When *Beijing Today* contacted the director of Nanjing Museum Xu Huping, he declined to comment on the issue. "I can't provide any comment before some matters are solved," he said. However a senior researcher in Nanjing, who declined to reveal his name, said that in fact the Palace Museum had already selected the most precious items from these treasures and moved them back to Beijing. The part remaining in Nanjing are mainly porcelain wares.

The quantity and quality of cultural relics are a vital criteria grading a museum. It is natural for the Nanjing side to want to hold on to these imperial porcelain wares, said the researcher.

Overdue return

There are over 2,211 crates, with over 100,000 pieces of cultural relics from the Forbidden City in the Nanjing Museum, including about 90,000 antique porcelain wares produced in official kilns, 1,332 copper Buddhas, 135 brush pens and 74 memorial tablets of the Qing Emperor's ancestors, as well as some incense burners.

The Nanjing Museum exhibited a part of these imperial cultural relics together with its own collection in Japan in the 1990s.

"These cultural relics reflect the history of the Imperial Palace, and they can only show full value in the Forbidden City," said Liang Jinsheng, deputy director of the Palace Museum, "For example, the memorial tablets of the ancestors of the Qing Imperial family. It makes no sense to display them in places other than the Forbidden City."

"At present the Imperial Palace is going through a large-scale renovation. Not only the buildings need renovation, the collection of national treasures should be restored too," he added.

Zhihua Temple Rings in the New Year

By Yi Yi

The loud music coming from the 560-year-old Zhihua Temple in tranquil Lumicang Hutong attracted many people from the neighborhood Tuesday morning. The small front courtyard of the temple, now called Beijing Cultural Relics Exchange Museum, was soon filled with a growing crowd.

Jing music, a special heritage of the temple, boasts a history of at least six hundred years. The performance, lead by 26th generation master Benxing and six newly recruited apprentices, was for the opening ceremony of the temple's bell and drum towers, reopened to the public after restoration.

"We are the only temple in Beijing municipality that has opened the bell and drum towers to the public," Wang Dan, curator of Zhihua Temple, told *Beijing Today* Tuesday. "We invited many old residents around the neighboring hutongs to beat the bell and drum to mark a good beginning of the new year."

An exhibition on the history and cultural connotations of bell and drum towers is currently underway. Visitors have the chance to learn about the traditional construction techniques and the architectural characteristics of the bell and drum towers.

Many elderly locals queued to climb the towers to beat the bell and drum for good luck. For them, the temple, which reopened in 1992 as a museum, is a familiar stranger. "We've been living nearby for ten or twenty years, but have never come in to look around," a Mrs. Zhang told *Beijing Today*, "it's very nice of the museum to invite us to participate in the event."

The bell, 1.6 meters in height, 1.05 meters in diameter, was cast in 1444, when the powerful eunuch Wang Zhen built this family temple. There are delicate lotus petal designs around the rim, and on each petal are Sanskrit inscriptions. There are 1,030 Sanskrit characters in total. The drum, a replica of the original, is 1.45 meters in length, 1.07 meters in diameter, and is vividly decorated with a design of two dragons playing with a pearl on each side.

The original drum now is kept in the Hall of the Tathagata, where the damaged lacquer layer is being restored.

Zhihua Temple is famous for its glazed black tiles and magnificently painted caisson ceilings. The biggest one in the main hall was stolen and sold to a dealer in the 1930s, and is now kept in the Nelson Atkins Museum of Art in the US.



Eighty-year-old master Benxing (left) playing the yunluo (gong).
Photo by Miao Yajie

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Stumble, by Miao Xiaochun

By Yu Shanshan

The Central Academy of Fine Arts has long been one of China's premier institutions for arts and design, yet did not official provide instruction in the art of photography until 2000. Now, that field is getting more respect as works by teachers from the photography department of the academy's School of Design are the stars of the exhibition "Encounters" at the CAFA Art Gallery near Wangfujing through Monday.

"We don't really care what school we belong to, or people fix us into," said Wang Chuan, director of the department. Indeed, the works of all the photography instructors seem more focused on innovation and creation than connection to any certain sub-category of art.

Conflicts between people, traditional culture and rapid social development have long been a rich mine of material for Chinese contemporary artists, and are addressed in the works of Wang Chuan, Miao Xiaochun and Wang Gongxin.

Wang Chuan draws attention to the confusion in the eyes of a woman he puts in the middle of an outdoor scene that resembles a traditional Chinese painting in *Starfish* or in an indoor public space in *Lobby*. His point seems to be to show modern forces have changed conceptions of beauty.

Ghostly figures haunt the pictures in Wang Gongxin's series "Here, or There" and almost all of Miao Xiaochun's photographs done since 1999. Using models in strange dresses made of knitting wool, Wang Gongxin argues that ghost worship is still very much in the minds of Chinese people

Teaching by Example

Show exhibits works by instructors from new photography school



A work by visiting French professor San Bartolom shot in Madrid in August 2003

despite the increasing modernity of their lifestyles. Miao's works at first look like simple landscapes of streets and parks, but close inspection reveals the inclusion of a fiberglass sculpture of an ancient scholar.

In his "Her" series, Lin Tong addresses the relationship of women to modern cities. His tools are real or toy animals that stand intimately close to one or two cool, sexy women. "Those animals can stand for anything—men, temptation, confusion, loneliness, whatever," he told *Beijing Today*.

Yao Lu and Ma Gang's works are more like experiments into the camera's powers to record subtle

changes in color. Yao changes the colors of regular things from daily life, such as fish, crabs and flowers, in the series "Five Elements-Gold" to push viewers to re-observe and reassess them. Ma, on the other hand, used his camera to record the gradual flushing of a man's face and upper chest while drinking wine in the piece *Red-Faced*. "Only photography can depict changes of color so precisely," he explained.

Even still-life works, such as those of artist Huang Ya, are done with inventively striking effects. In *Image-Imagination-Image*, Huang depicts "hurt" ("to me, people and the environment", he said) in a direct and simple way—he completely covers himself and some items such as miniature landscapes, books and old fashioned printing machines in hunks of raw meat and then shoots them as stomach-churning still-lives.

Probably the most titillating work in the show is Wang Longjiang's *Wood, Porcelain, Fabric*, which is more like an installment than a single piece. Ten *chungong*, ancient Chinese sexual sculptures, are put into wood boxes draped with fabric, creating an intimate, if not scandalous, vibe.

In order to represent the wide range and potential of photographic art, four clips from an Internet-based computer game, part of new media artist Feng Mengbo's famed

"Shot" series of interactive digital works, are also on show. "I think that because this is an academic exhibition, we should display all possibilities," Wang Chuan told *Beijing Today*.

Such diversity was further enriched by the inclusion of four Australian guest professors from the Queensland College of Art of Griffith University, which helped in the establishment of CAFA's photography department.

Wang took part in a joint program between the academy and Griffith University from 1998 to 1999 and was instructed by these teachers. According to him, Australian photographers' expressions are relatively delicate, like Siegfried Manietta's landscapes and Lois Conner's portraits of women late into pregnancy, as well as scientific, exemplified by Joseph McDowall's search for the line between nude art and pornography.

An article commenting on Miao Xiaochun's work in the October 27, 2003 issue of *New Weekly* magazine noted, "To build a new world is not merely the privilege of painting—photography is capable of doing that as well. This imaginary world, with the help of digital technology, can be confidently rearranged by artists in a form of utmost vividness." This challenging, engaging show is evidence of the verity of that statement.

Smokestack to Get Artistic Treatment

By Yu Shanshan

The municipal government ran a campaign last year to demolish many of the ugly, old chimneys from coal burning plants around town mostly built in the 1950s. Yet one of the most conspicuous of these smokestacks, a chimney towering 240 meters over the east end of Chang'an Avenue, survived. Instead of being torn down, the eyesore will be transformed into a veritable landmark over the next year.

Built in 1997, the chimney belongs to Beijing Co-generation Branch Company under Guohua Electric Power Corp., which is responsible for providing coal-powered heat to one-fourth of Beijing, including the Central Business District (CBD).

At the end of 2002, a real estate company affiliated to Guohua Electric Power began construction of the massive China Central Place real estate project which includes five office buildings, two luxury hotels, a shopping mall and nine high-end residential buildings next door to the generation company. Company leaders decided the chimney towering over the project was not in keeping with its modern design and on December 19, 2002, announced the launch of a contest for designs for dressing up the smokestack.

"People had never heard of decorating a chimney. It's a first for us, and for everybody," Li Xinyi, director of the construction section of Beijing Co-generation Branch Company, told *Beijing Today* on December 19. The one-month contest, held January 1 to 29, 2003, drew an unexpected 789 plans, most submitted by people with no formal design training.

Only around 40 of the designs were taken into serious consideration. A panel of seven architecture and power experts appraised the entrants over three days in February, finally choosing a design submitted by KPF Associates, a New York based architectural design firm that designed the Shanghai World Financial Center.

The original design called for a fluted steel framework to be stretched over the chimney and then covered in alternating pieces of metal and colored glass.

"KPS's work stood out from the many that had very Chinese elements, looking like dragons, phoenixes, or even *tanghulu* (sugarcoated haw fruit on a stick), and conveys a modern feeling," said Li Yijun, a Guohua employee and member of the judging committee.

The appraisal panel was led by Jiang Huancheng, who designed the Oriental Pearl TV Tower in Shanghai and presided over the

redesign of the World Financial Center. He told *Beijing Today* that he loved KPF's plan because of its simplicity, strength and reasonable structure.

Jiang's design firm was in charge of producing the detailed design. After solving problems hidden in KPF's original plan, they came up with a more beautiful and lighter design based on a structure of steel cable mesh. In this plan, 48 200-meter-long steel cables will extend from a 40-meter tall structure up to the top of the chimney and be covered by a skin of steel pieces. The mesh will help the structure handle high winds, while the metal pieces will reflect colorful light shining from powerful lights on the ground.

Though some people have questioned whether decorating a chimney is a worthy cause for significant financial investment, Guohua is determined and has already received construction approval from the municipal planning commission. Final blueprints are currently being drawn for the project.

Construction is scheduled to start in March and be completed by the end of this year with an estimated investment of 10 million yuan.

The finished smokestack should be a one-of-a-kind in China. "This chimney can receive such good treatment because of its position. Other chimneys in the capital cannot be so lucky," Jiang joked.



The updated design for the decoration of the 240-meter chimney is based on a mesh of steel cables.

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Dance Festival Kicks High

By Dong Nan

Hot on the heels of the First Beijing International Drama Festival and the Sixth Beijing International Symphony Festival, the First Beijing International Dance Festival is currently under way.

The festival opened on December 12 and will run until January 20. Along with local ensembles, dance troupes from Russia, Belarus, Canada, France and Cuba will give performances of ballet, modern dance, and Chinese and foreign traditional folk dances.

The National Ballet of China's *Dahong Denglong Gaogao Gua (Raise the Red Lantern)* and *Hongse Nianzijun (Red Detachment of Women)*, which recently toured Europe, are highlights of the festival.

Raise the Red Lantern is adapted from Zhang Yimou's 1993 film of the same name, and is directed by Zhang.

Langman yu Fengliu (Romance and Taste), by China Orientation Song and Dance Ensemble, was one of the early successes of the festival. The 11 performances are all completely sold out. The production was adapted from the troupe's two best known pieces, *Weilanse de Langman (Blue Romance)* and *Huacai Chang Fengliu (Grand Taste)*.



Langman yu Fengliu

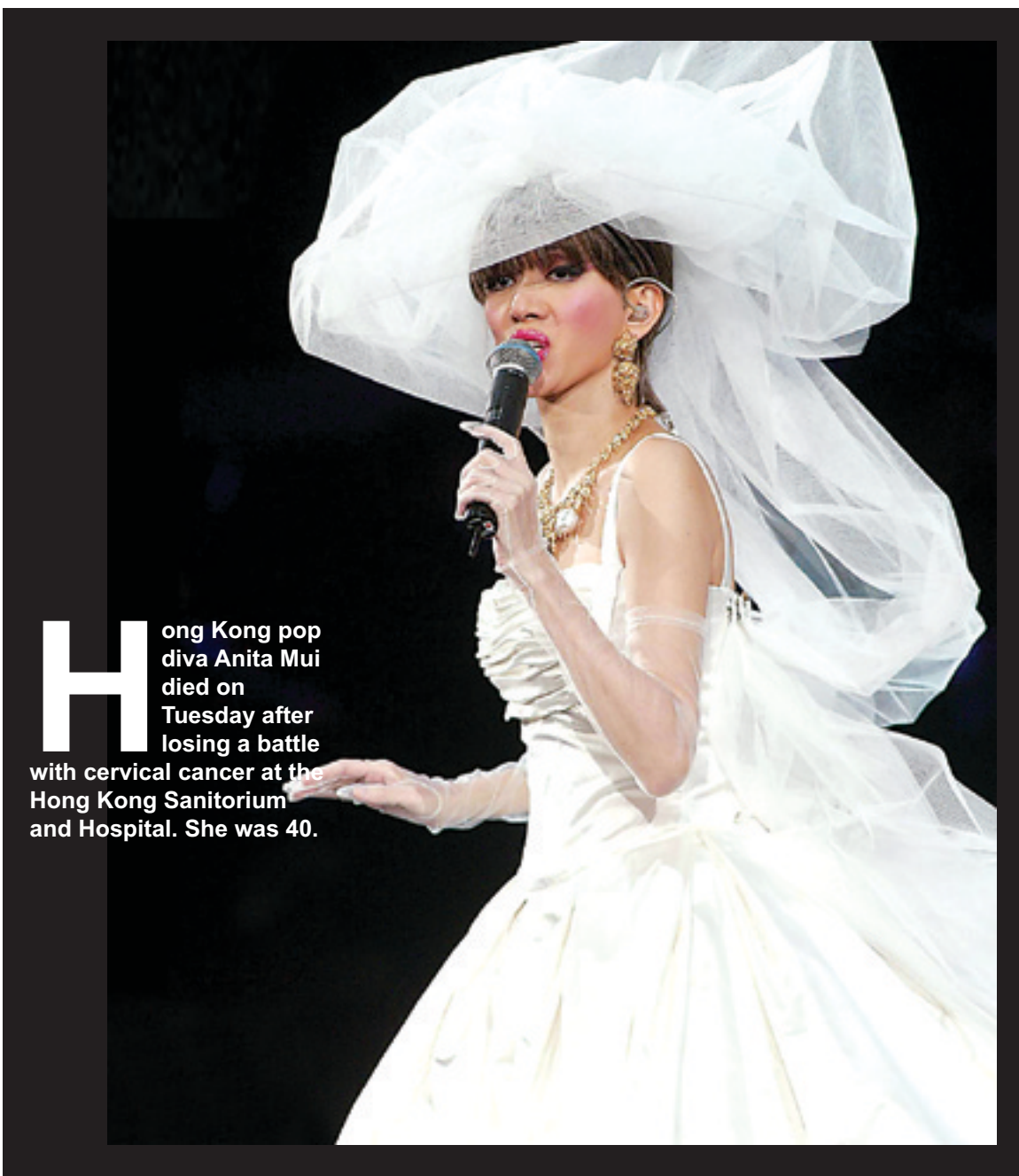
Rock Review

Miserable Faith

By Dong Nan

Tongku de Xinyang (Miserable Faith) are a rap metal band whose uncompromising and distinctive performance style has won them a loyal following in Beijing's underground music scene. In 2001, they signed a contract with Howling Disc and released their first album *Zheshi Ge Wenti (That's a Problem)*.

With their hard, solid rhythms, and the hoarse and fierce vocals of singer Gao Hu, their music is anything but "miserable." Their lyrics, which deal



Hong Kong pop diva Anita Mui died on Tuesday after losing a battle with cervical cancer at the Hong Kong Sanatorium and Hospital. She was 40.

By Dong Nan

Singapore pop star A-Du released his third Chinese album titled *Hello* on Christmas Eve across Asia.

"The title means 'A-Du says 'Hello' to his fans around the world,'" the albums liner notes helpfully explain.

A-Du is well known for his romantic and simple love songs, such as his popular *Tianhei (The Night)* and *Ta Yiding Hen Aini (He Must Love You Deeply)*. How-

A-Du Learns to Rock

ever, on the new album, he ventures into rock 'n' roll for the first time with two songs titled *Wunengweili (Helpless)* and *Tuirang (Give in)*.

"Many said that my voice is not suited for rock music, but I feel it is fine. When I sing rock songs, the feeling is just like shouting, and those songs are not as sad as my other songs," declared A-Du in a press release.



with social problems and their concerns about young people's responsibility and conscience, clearly strike a chord with their fans, who pick up lines such as "Where there's oppression, there is revolution" and "Where is your hot blood?" as a mantra.

The band are at their best live. Whether playing at parties

or on larger stages, such as Midi Music Festival in 2002 and 2003, they always inspire a wildly enthusiastic response. Sometimes Gao Hu substitutes simple slogans and words for his more complex lyrics, but the impact is still devastating.

Line up:
Vocal: Gao Hu, Guitar: Li Yuchuan, Tian Ran, Qilin, Bass: Zhang Jing, Drums: Zhang Bing, Chi Gongwei

Zheshi Ge Wenti (That's a Problem) 2001

Recommendations: *Nali you Yapo Nali jiu you Fankang (Where there's oppression, there is revolution)*, *Wansui (Long Live)*, *Zheshi Ge Wenti (That's a Problem)*



A-Du

WORLDWIDE



'Rings' Races to \$270 Million Overseas

With Christmas falling on a Thursday this year, *The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King* enjoyed a festive weekend at the international box office as its foreign earnings total soared to \$270 million in 12 days.

The final episode of the J.R.R. Tolkien trilogy pulled in an estimated \$83 million for the Friday-to-Sunday frame from 38 markets. Its overall total ranks 27 percent ahead of where last year's *The Two Towers* was after 12 days and 73 percent ahead of *The Fellowship of the Ring* in 2001.



Earl Hindman in Home Improvement

Actor Hindman, Home Improvement Neighbor, Dies

Actor Earl Hindman, best known for his role as the never-seen next-door neighbor who imparts advice as he peers over Tim Allen's backyard fence in the hit television series *Home Improvement*, has died, his wife said on Tuesday. He was 61.

Hindman died of lung cancer at Stamford Hospital in Connecticut early on Monday, said his wife, Molly McGreevy, a priest at St. Francis Episcopal Church in Stamford.

A character actor, Hindman launched his 30-year career on stage before appearing in numerous films, television series and specials. He played Detective Bob Reid on the ABC soap opera *Ryan's Hope* for over a decade.

Carmen Extravaganza Aims to Seduce New Opera Fans

Producers are making a \$15 million bet that Gypsy temptress Carmen, one of the world's favorite opera heroines, will seduce fresh fans with an extravagant new production on the streets of her home town.

A world-famous conductor, an Oscar-nominated director and a cast of international stars — armed with a fat budget — are working to bring the fiery cigar-rolling star of Georges Bizet's opera *Carmen* back to her native Spanish city of Seville.

This time, the tale of doomed love — best known for its *Toreador Song* — will be played out in the city's streets and squares, climaxing in the Maestranza bullring, where Carmen's soldier lover murders her in a fit of jealousy over a bullfighter rival for her sensuous affections.

The Rolling Stones' performance at the *SARSfest* extravaganza in Toronto last July will be released on DVD next spring.



Stones to Release Toronto SARS Gig on DVD

The Rolling Stones' performance at the *SARSfest* extravaganza in Toronto last July will be released on DVD next spring.

The Stones' tour manager, Michael Cohl, told the Toronto Sun that all 13 performers at the July 30 Downsview Park concert were recorded and should be included in the DVD, but it's not known if the entire concert will be released.



Film Beauty Charlize Theron Becomes Monster in Film

For actress Charlize Theron, turning ugly for her role in *Monster* was reasonably easy: a little make-up to freckle her clear complexion, a set of crooked teeth to yellow her pearly smile and a diet of potato chips to bulk up her slender frame.

The statuesque beauty of *The Italian Job* is transformed in the new film into Aileen Wuornos, a prostitute who was executed in Florida in 2002 for murdering six men.

Sources: Reuters

北京青年报
BEIJING TODAY
今日北京

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Mini 'mud men', 20-40 yuan each

Photo by Jessica Lin

Little Hunks of Old Beijing

By Jessica Lin

Hidden among the skewered and fried carnage of Wangfujing Snack Street, the tiny Xiaozhang Mud Man store still manages to draw lots of customers with its interesting and authentic folk toys.

The special of the house are clay figures, translated literally as mud men. Many of these figures represent old Beijing cul-

ture, from courtyard houses to Manchu maidens, Peking Opera masks to scenes from life in the capital many years ago. The pieces are designed and made by native Beijinger Zhang Yujun, a passionate preserver of customs nearly forgotten in this city.

The store is filled with mud men, ranging from the size of a finger to half-a-meter tall, por-

traying go players, cross talk performers, crowds watching cricket fights and roving vendors and cost a mere 20 to 50 yuan per piece. Among the most popular are figurines of children playing, sleeping, laughing or doing other kid things in late Qing dynasty garb, which go for 20 yuan each.

The walls also showcase kites, drums, fans and other old

Beijing folk items priced from 15 to 100 yuan.

Zhang's mud men can also be found in some local shopping centers, such as the Hongqiao Market, but prices are lower and the atmosphere is better at his own little store.

Where: No. 227 Wangfujing Street at the east entrance to Wangfujing Snack Street, Dongcheng **Open:** 9 am - 9 pm

Ethnic Wood Works

By Feng Yani

Towards the east end of Yandaixiejie, which runs from the Drum Tower to Houhai, stands the little shop Dazzle (Muxuan Shenmi), a specialist in wood artworks of the Naxi people of Yunnan Province.

Store owner Sun Chaoqun is obsessed with Naxi culture and opened the store in October as



(Left) 'Happy family' totem, 200 yuan; Leather windchimes, 45 - 70 yuan

Photos by David

an outlet for his interest and a place to show and sell a wide variety of Naxi wood works. Many are tied to traditional sacrificial activities from the Dongba religion, giving them a rough, mysterious feel, and all are hand carved and colored using ancient techniques.

One interesting item is a plain wooden disc carved with a totemic frog (200 yuan) that is worshipped by the Naxi as their ancestor and considered a symbol of fertility. The image of another powerful spirit, the eagle saint, is etched onto a similar disk. This spirit is considered a protector of farmland and animals and the striking piece is priced at 320 yuan.

Smaller items include a black ladle engraved with Dongba characters that sells for 120 yuan. Other goods, including fan-shaped wood plates with carved characters and wood-based pictures of the wonderful landscape of the Naxi hometown of Lijiang, make beautiful gifts or home decorations and generally fetch around 200 yuan.

Items from outside Yunnan, including wood carvings from Malaysia, occupy another end of the store.

Where: No.12 Yandaixiejie, Houhai, Xicheng **Open:** 11 am - 11 pm **Tel:** 6404 0367

Traditional Clothes that Break the Mold

By Chen Si

Zhou Jianguo, a former businessman in the field of science and technology, is a somewhat unlikely candidate for owning a fashion store. Yet by making full use of his natural artistic gifts, he has filled Yin Hu, his shop in Jiayi Market, with attractive traditional Chinese-style clothes, accessories and furniture spiced up with modern touches.

Now that traditional garb seems to be coming back into vogue, there are many shops selling old-style Chinese clothes in the capital. Yet Zhou's designs manage to stand out, in no small part due to the use of vibrant, searing color, such as purple, coral, pink and vivid green. The pink and blue items especially succeed in shattering the conservative customs of using deep colors for such clothing. Prices are not terribly high, around 500 yuan to 1,000 yuan for an outfit.

Other interesting items include cotton-padded jackets for winter spruced up with intricate hand stitching. They are ideal for making a splash at a New



Photo by Chen Si

Year's party or Spring Festival celebration. Also check out Yin Hu's line of unique jewelry wrought of silver and amber.

Zhou is more than happy to provide customers with advice on fashion or how to add style to their homes, such as by decorating a simple wall with a woodcarving or piece of embroidery.

Where: No. 922 Jiayi Market, opposite the Kunlun Hotel, 3 Xinyuannanli, Chaoyang **Open:** 10 am - 9 pm **Tel:** 13901042234

Thai-style Totes

By Tina Wei

A complete wardrobe should include a full range of bags to meet different occasions. To find bags that make fun, exotic fashion statements, it is worth checking out the Thai-style goods at NaRaYa, a store in the mall at Oriental Plaza.

These bags feature an appealing mix of simplicity and elegance. One handbag has a pattern of red birds and green leaves, while another carries an embroidered image of a smiling old lady's face. Despite bearing such beautiful detail, the bags are quite reasonable, with purses priced around 30

yuan, vanity bags around 70 yuan and handbags from 80 to 200 yuan.

NaRaYa also stocks a selection of travel bags, rucksacks and garment bags, all made of cotton or Thai silk and cleverly lined to make them waterproof. Equally attractive are the imported silk pajamas that are sinfully comfortable and beautiful, priced at 360 yuan per pair. Service is helpful and friendly and clerks can introduce customers to many aspects of Southeast Asian culture.

Where: No. BB40, the mall at Oriental Plaza, Chang'an Avenue, Chaoyang **Open:** 9:30 am - 9:30 pm



Photo by Tina Wei

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365 Days of Dining

By Joel Kirkhart

Over the past year, *Beijing Today's* food page has taken in-depth looks at a wide range of topics, from imperial fare to humble noodles, tofu to strawberries. Below is a short summation of the fruits of our culinary culling.

The dry cold of winter and other times that challenge immunity (such as this spring) should be countered with soothing foods rich in nutrition. Perhaps the best, if not strangest, fare to fit that bill incorporates traditional medicinal ingredients, such as that served at the Tingliquan restaurant in the Summer Palace. Also appropriate are Chinese soups, which range from the very simple to such exotic stews as *fotiaoqiang*, or "Buddha jumping over the wall", that can fetch up to 2,000 yuan per large bowl at the Royal Food Restaurant in the World Trade Center.

Noodles may not be medicinal, but can really hit the spot on a cold day, normally for minimal cost. Central China is the source of many kinds of delicious noodles, such as *yangrou huimian*, soup noodles with lamb and vegetables and *yangrou paomo*, lamb and noodles in a rich broth filled with little chunks of dense bread.

Hot pot is possibly the city's favorite way to warm up – hot pot restaurants can be found at restaurants all over, yet it is also very easy to cook at home. For a change of pace, try the unusual *huoguo* at Chuanlitun off Sanlitun Bar Street.

When temperatures finally do rise, it is time to enjoy the thrill of the grill. Carrefour stores stock a good range of barbecue equipment, or spare yourself the effort and indulge in the delicious BBQ at beautiful Agrilandia, an Italian restaurant/farm in Shunyi. Smoothies proved a popular summer treat last year, as two fruit-drink purveyors opened in Oriental Plaza alone.

Our focuses on produce turned up some tasty tips. We found cubic watermelons may look cool, but "ice cream" melons taste much better. When shopping for strawberries, look for the *fengxiang* variety for their shape, color and flavor. *Zaodan* and *xianfeng* are recommended varieties of cherries sure to satisfy.

When it comes to buying chilies, judge by heat – *jianjiao* peppers are tasty and mild, while tiny Thai bird chilies are the hottest to be found at most local markets.

A few stores in town offer freshly picked herbs for adding flavor to food, but a more lasting fix can be found with whole potted plants at the herb stand in the Laitai Flower market.

There are myriad kinds of tofu, from the familiar fresh versions to funky fermented types. If you love to eat *doufu*, try the remarkable Huainan Tofu Banquet Restaurant on Wanquanhe Lu in Haidian.

In June, our reviewers put their livers on the line in a scientific beer taste test and determined Erdinger of Germany makes mighty brew.

Months later, the same brave group later took their kidneys and nerves to the edge with a test of ground coffees, favoring expensive and rich Lavazza Rosa and dark horse domestic product Yunnan Espresso. Good places to go for espresso without the effort include Tasty Taste on Gongti Beilu and Kosmo in the in new Lotus Lane strip.

Rave Reviews

High end:

Gisa and Mediterraneo

These two restaurants stand out among Beijing's many Italian establishments, Gisa for excellent quality and authenticity, Mediterraneo for classy food and a comfortable patio.

Where: Building 8, 1 A North Sanlitun Street, Chaoyang **Tel:** 6415-3691

Dadong and Duwang

Two Beijing duck stars. Dadong specializes in relatively low fat duck and a range of eclectic, masterfully-cooked dishes.

Where: 3 Tuanjiehu Beikou, Chaoyang **Tel:** 6582 2982

The duck at Duwang is succulent and cleverly cut into de-fat-

Over the past year, *Beijing Today* reviewed dozens of local restaurants, admittedly only scratching the surface of the dining choices in the capital. Below is the short list of our favorites feeding finds of 2003, separated into three categories: high end, meaning 80 yuan and up per person, mid-range, 40 yuan to 80 yuan, and low-end, 40 yuan and below.



It pays to shell out extra to get the best Beijing duck.

ted strips for easier rolling.

Tandoor

This cozy Indian restaurant

boasts fine, if expensive, food, evening dancing shows and a great lunch special.

Where: First floor, Zhaolong Hotel, Chaoyang **Tel:** 6597 2299 ext. 2112

Hatsune

California-style sushi rolls, such as the Black Widow and 119, star among good more traditional Japanese fare at this stylish restaurant.

Where: Heqiao Building C, A8 Guanghua Lu, Chaoyang **Tel:** 6581 3939

Café Sambal

This humble, funky Malaysian restaurant serves up truly authentic Malay food, including Kapitan curry chicken and *assam* eggs.

Where: 43 Doufu Chi Hutong (east of Jiugulou Dajie), Dongcheng **Tel:** 6400 4875

Where: 201 Huizhongli, Datun Lu, Chaoyang **Tel:** 6491 9665



Huidoufu with beef is a tasty, spicy Guizhou specialty – try it at Zunyi Meishi.

Mid-range:

Boat Quay

This fun restaurant specializes in authentic Singaporean fare, including curried fish head with pineapple (*gali yutou*) and coffee pork chops (*kafei zhupai*)

Where: 12B Xinzhong Jie, 128 Ziming Plaza, Dongcheng **Tel:** 6417 9683

Yipin Jiangnan

Tucked behind Ikea, this restaurant serves authentic Hangzhou cuisine, such as *dongpo rou*

(stewed pork) and West Lake sour fish (*Xihu cuyu*).

Where: Building 34, Yuzhong Xili, Madian, Xicheng **Tel:** 6207 9988

Guizhou Dasha

The inside is tacky and loud, but the service is good and it's the best Guizhou food in town. Must tries include the sour soup fish (*suantang yu*) and crispy meat with chilies (*hupi jianjiao chao cuishao*).

Where: Heping Xiqiao, No. 18 Yinghua Xijie **Tel:** 6444 4466

Yuanyiguo Restaurant

The dish that packs 'em in to this little joint is *yangxiezi*, a delicious hot pot of sheep backbones stewed with over 30 herbs and spices.

Where: 65 Guang'anmen Neidajie, Xuanwu **Tel:** 6304 0943

Baguobuyi

The Ping'an Dajie venue is a perfect place to take guests, with its good Sichuan food and fun nightly face-changing shows.

Where: 89-3 Di'anmen Dongdajie, Dongcheng **Tel:** 6400 8888

Muse

One of the few local Vietnamese restaurants to emphasize food over decor with solid *pho*, addictive spring rolls and amazing crispy sautéed fish.

Where: Next to west gate of Chaoyang Park **Tel:** 6586 3188

Xiang Chang Xiang

This little Hunan restaurant cooks up killer crawfish and incendiary, tasty hot pots.

Where: 10 Tuanjiehu Dongli, Chaoyang **Tel:** 8596 6628

Low end:

Jiachangcai.Com

This little IT-themed restaurant cooks up winning Sichuan,

Shandong and Cantonese fare.

Where: Kaiqi Building, Beisanhuan Zhonglu, Haidian **Tel:** 8200 6062

Zaliang Shifu



A good place to go for tasty, lighter fare, generally involving wild greens, grains, congee and mushrooms.

Where: No. 9 Huizhong Lu, Chaoyang **Tel:** 6491 1085

Jiaxiang'e

The signature items of the two local branches of this Guizhou restaurant are goose-based dishes and hot pots.

Where: No. 3 Zaojunmiao, Haidian **Tel:** 6212 6945

Jiupingxiang Jiaozi

This place cooks up delicious dumplings in dozens of varieties, some served in tasty soups for a more complete meal.

Where: 89 Guang'anmen Neidajie, Xuanwu **Tel:** 6318 0518

Meizhou Dongpo

The Chunxiu Lu branch of this popular Sichuan chain offers top quality for price – try

the tender stewed pork elbow in spicy sauce (*Dongpo zhouzi*).

Where: No. 7 Chunxiu Road, Dongcheng **Tel:** 6417 1566

Richang

This chain of Cantonese restaurants is booming on the strength of such delicacies as foil-wrapped chicken wings (*zhibao jichi*) and garlicky *bifengtang*-style dishes.

Where: 8 Huayuan Donglu, Haidian **Tel:** 8203 8155 **Where:** just north of Chaoyang Park West Gate **Tel:** 6593 1078

Goldpeacock Dai Ethnic Flavor

You gotta love the potato balls (*tudou qiu*), cold salad (*liangban sansi*) and fish steamed in banana leaf (*xiangyebao zhengyu*) at this ever-popular purveyor of the food of Yunnan's Dai people.

Where: 2 Minzu Daxue Beilu, Weigongcun, Haidian **Tel:** 6893 2030

Culinary Tours of China

By Xiao Rong

Chinese cuisine has long been divided into eight schools, namely Shandong, Sichuan, Guangdong, Fujian, Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Hunan and Anhui, which not only correspond to those eight provinces, but also reflect the common Chinese belief in the magical nature of the number eight.

Yet many other regions of the country have developed their own cuisines that are delicious, distinct and worth checking out. In 2003, *Beijing Today* provided in-depth introductions to four regional cuisines, those of Guizhou, Hunan, Inner Mongolia and Yunnan. Below is a summary of what we found.

While it remains somewhat obscure, food from remote Guizhou Province is gaining popularity in Beijing, mostly due to its unusual ingredients and delicious mixtures of textures and flavors. One star ingredient is *hong suan*, or tomato vinegar, a rich, red brew made from wild tomatoes native only to the mountains of Guizhou. Also unique is *mujiangziyou*, a yellow oil made from a natural root that smells like soap but tastes fresh and fantastic. *Suantang yu* and *Wujiang yu* are two famous Guizhou hot pot-style fish dishes that should not be missed.

Called "the home of rice and fish (*yumi zhixiang*)", Hunan cooking is known for its liberal application of spice. Smoked meats, or *larou*, and generous use of hot peppers are two elements that unify the different kinds of Hunanese cooking. Heat sources popular in Hunan include *duo lajiao*, pickled red chilies that are spicy and salty, and *bai lajiao*, seasoned sun-dried green chili peppers.

Though Mongolian cuisine has an unfair reputation as being unrefined in some circles, its simple cooking methods, especially roasting, often bring out wonderful flavor from basic main ingredients such as mutton, dairy and wheat-based products. Whole roast lamb (*kao quanyang*) and other dishes making use of lamb legs, backs and tails are typical Mongolian delicacies often served at grand events.

For less conventional fare (bees and worms anyone?) Yunnan cuisine is absolutely worth investigating. There are many intriguing Yunnan-style restaurants in town, from new, classy joints to a modest, beloved eatery that serves foods of the Dai minority people.

In the end, one thing *Beijing Today* determined this year is that it pays to dabble in the many kinds of Chinese cuisines available in this city – there is certain to be something just waiting to blow you and your taste buds off your seat.

Cuisine, Concentrated

By James Liu

The past year was a tough one for the local food service industry, as the SARS outbreak killed off many medium and small-sized restaurants. Yet many fine eateries survived, and the whole experience may have helped weed out the weak and force restaurants to take their craft more seriously.

This competitive atmosphere has led to a revival of Beijing tradition with the rise of increasing numbers of "food streets," roads lined by restaurants that draw diners with good quality fare at fair prices.

Eleven such food streets were investigated in *Beijing Today's* food pages in 2003. Some have

already earned names for themselves as dining centers, such as Haidian's Huayuan Lu, perhaps the greatest rival yet to always-popular eating center Ghost Street. The street offers wonderful variety, with many generally inexpensive restaurants serving

up Sichuan, Hunan and Dongbei food, as well as spicy crabs and soothing noodles. Another solid food street is Chunxiu Lu in Chaoyang District, home to sev-

eral outstanding outlets of popular chain restaurants and other local institutions such as *shuizhu yu* specialist Feiteng Yuxiang.

Several other dining centers have been evolving towards being prime places to eat. Hualong Street in Wangfujing has lost a bit of its former charm to development, but still is home to good Chinese and western restaurants. The cluster of restaurants around the west gate of

Chaoyang Park is perhaps the most diverse in the city – choices range from simple *baozi* to premier Italian, nouvelle Vietnamese to Persian. Xiaoyun Lu near the Sanyuan Bridge in Chaoyang is another appealing dining concentration, offer good Korean, Japanese, Sichuan hot pot and classy Taiwanese restaurants as well as a specialist in lamb and *huangjiu*, or yellow wine.

Even the previously quiet area

of Shishahai entered the fray with the October opening of Lotus Lane. The bars on the lake-side strip are overpriced and generally unimpressive, but the restaurants are surprisingly attractive and interesting. Overall, depending on perspective, this mini food street is either a fine addition to the crowded Houhai area or the final straw in the complete tourist-ification of the historic lakes.

Music

**Fu Cong Solo Piano Concert**

Renowned pianist Fu Cong performs a solo concert to celebrate his 70th birthday. He will play a selection of works featuring Chopin and Mozart.

Where: Poly Theater, 1/F Poly Plaza, 14 Dongzhimen Nandajie, Dongcheng District
When: January 3, 7:30 pm
Admission: 80 - 800 yuan **Tel:** 6500 1188 - 5126

**Selections of Mozart**

The Beijing Youth Chamber Ensemble presents works by Mozart including selections from *The Marriage of Figaro*, Violin Concerto No 4 in D Major and Symphony No. 29 in A Major and more.

Where: Forbidden City Concert Hall, Jianguomenwai Dajie, opposite the Scitech Building, inside Zhongshan Park, Xi Chang'an Jie, Xicheng District
When: January 2, 2 pm
Admission: 10 - 100 yuan **Tel:** 6559 8285

Activities

Ping Gu County, East of Beijing

A walk up through an orchard to a ridge to enjoy a wonderful view. This walk follows a wide trail more like a small road. There are only two hills to climb. The walk passes lonely farms, villages, country roads and windy ridges.

Where: pick up at Lido Hotel outside Starbucks Cafe
When: January 4, 8:30 am, come back at 5 pm - 5:30 pm
Admission: free **Tel:** 13910025516

**YPHH Wine Tasting at Centro**

The second YPHH Wine Tasting at Centro. If you missed the November event, make sure you make it for this one! Again you will have the chance to taste wines from five different continents (one of each); this time we have chosen the Cabernet Sauvignon grape. Centro provides hot and cold canapes and snacks.

Where: the lobby bar of The Kerry Centre Hotel
When: January 7, 6:30 pm - 8:30 pm
Admission: 100 yuan **Tel:** 6430 1412

Spring Couplets and Chinese Knot Hangings (Zhongguo Jie)

Try your hand at writing chun lian before the Chinese New Year, which is a must for every Chinese family during the Spring Festival! Chun lian, poetic couplets written on red

paper and pasted on the top or two sides of the door, is a centuries-old tradition for ordinary people to bring good wishes for the New Year, as well as for shops and companies to gain lucrative business in the coming year. A couplet on your door also adds to the New Year atmosphere.

Where: Beijing Friendship Association with Foreign Countries, a traditional courtyard with a big red gate, no. 97, Nanheyuan Street, one street west of Wangfujing shopping street
When: January 10, 2:30 pm - 4:30 pm
Admission: 50 yuan **Tel:** 8851 4913

Stage

Romeo and Juliet

The Belarussian Ballet performs the classic love tragedy at Beijing Exhibition Theater. One of the most celebrated ballet companies of the former-USSR, the troupe boasts 20 world-famous ballet stars.

Where: Beijing Exhibition Theater, 135 Xizhimenwai Dajie, Xicheng District
When: January 7 - 8, 7:30 pm
Admission: 80 - 800 yuan **Tel:** 6835 4455

Opera: Cangyuan (Grassland)

An epic about the migration of a Mongolian tribe from Russia to China in the Qing Dynasty. Produced by Liaoning Opera.

Where: Tiaoqiao Theater, 30 Beiwei Lu, Xuanwu District
When: January 6, 7:30 pm
Admission: 80 - 380 yuan **Tel:** 8315 6300

Drama: Xiangchi Mahua Xian Gei Ni Ning (If You Want to Eat Mahua, I Can Make You Some)

An easygoing comedy based on a clerk who decides to make a Faustian pact. Starring He Jiong, Yu Na and Xie Na.

Where: Yifu Theater, Central Academy of Drama
When: till February 20, 7:30 pm
Admission: 180 yuan **Tel:** 6401 3959

Drama: Nanren de Zibai (The Confession of a Man)

This story about a couple of intellectuals discusses the relationship between power and feelings. Directed by Re Ming, starring Feng Yuanzheng and Liang Danni.

Where: People's Art Theater, 22 Wangfujing Dajie (behind Capital Theater)
When: till January 30, 7:30 pm
Admission: 100 yuan **Tel:** 6525 0123

Drama: Shouxin Kuailie (Happily Receiving Letters)

A girl and a boy maintain a friendship through writing to each other as they are growing up. They write about their life stories, and when they grow up they find out their connection is closer than they had realized. Performed by the My Dear Troupe from Taiwan. Directed by Shan Chengju. Starring pop singer Wan Fang.

Where: Beijing North Theater, Bei Bingmasi Hutong, 67 Jiadaokou Nan Dajie.
When: January 5, 10, 7:30 pm
Admission: 30 - 150 yuan **Tel:** 6404 8021

Drama: Li Bai

Li Bai, one of China's greatest poets, offered a unique impression of people in his own time. What was his psychological world actually like? Directed by Su Min and

starring Pu Cunxin.

Where: Capital Theater, 22 Wangfujing Dajie
When: till February 8 12, 7:30 pm
Admission: 80 - 280 yuan **Tel:** 6524 9847



Sports

International Swimming Winter Camp

The program is for 7-12 year old kids

Where: No. 40 Liangmaqiaolu, 1000m east of the Lufthansa Shopping City
When: February 1 through 10
Admission: 1,600 yuan per person **Tel:** 64663311 - 3186, Miss Tao

Movies

**Wo He Baba (My Father And I)**

My Father And I is a touching story about the relationship between a Chinese father and daughter. When Xiao Yu (Xu Jinglei)'s parents get divorced, she lives with her mother and her father disappears from her life. But when tragedy strikes and her world is forever changed, her father returns. The rest of the movie tells the story of a father and daughter getting to know each other again. Their relationship is not an easy one. But their struggle to understand each other is one that many fathers and daughters have known.

Where: Cherry Lane Movies, 29 Liangmaqiao Lu, Chaoyang District
When: January 9, 8 pm
Admission: 50 yuan **Tel:** 13901134745

Yu Guanyin (Jaded Guanyin)

The movie is based on renowned pop novel writer Haiyan's work of the same name. It tells of the tragic love triangle between An Xin (Vicky Zhao), a beautiful but unsophisticated policewoman, Mao Jie (Nicholas Tse), an attractive drug smuggler and Yang Rui (Liu Yunlong), a cynical but kind white-collar worker. Directed by Ann Hui.

Where: cinemas across town
When: till January 20



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By Dong Nan



Exhibition Celebrating the New Year

Featuring Guan Yong's *Classic* series, Luan Xiaojie's *Big Boy* series and Li Qiang's oil paintings. All of their works reflect the impact of modern society in China.

Where: Qin Gallery, 1-1E Enjoy Paradise, Huaweili, north of Beijing Curio City, Chaoyang District
When: till January 26, daily 9:30 am - 7 pm
Admission: free **Tel:** 8779 0458

Exhibitions

Modern Painting Exhibition

Features the works of three young painters: Wang Xingwei, Wang Yin and Yan Lei.

Where: China Art Archives & Warehouse, opposite the Nangao Police Station, Caochang Dicun, Jichang Fulu, Chaoyang District
When: till February 1, Wednesday - Sunday, 2 pm - 5 pm
Admission: free **Tel:** 8456 5152

**Underwear, Incubators and Rice**

An eccentric group show of contemporary Asian artists, involving installations, sculptures and paintings.

Where: China Art Seasons, 2 Jiuxianqiao Lu, Dashanzi Art District
When: till January 10, Tuesday - Sunday, 11 am - 7 pm
Admission: free **Tel:** 6431 1900

Collotype Printed Paintings

The art of collotype printing is a traditional hand printing technique, introduced to China in the late Qing Dynasty. Creation Gallery owns the largest collotype-making studio in China, which applies the most advanced modern plate-making technique in copying the elaborate works of Li Keran, Zhang Daqian and other great artists.

Where: Creation Gallery, North end of Ritan Dong Lu
When: January 10 - 30, daily 10 am - 7 pm
Admission: free **Tel:** 8046 3361

**Group Exhibition for Renowned Chinese Painters**

Featuring works by Qi Bai-shi, Zhang Daqian, Xu Beihong, Fu Baofeng, Lin Fengmian, Wu Guanzhong and Cheng Shifa.

Where: Wan Fung Art Gallery, 136 Nanchizi Dajie, Dongcheng District
When: till January 18, Monday noon - 6 pm, Tuesday - Sunday 10 am - 6pm
Admission: free **Tel:** 6523 3320

**Games of the New Year**

Sixteen modern oil painters including Wang Wenjun, Qing Pu and Jia Qionig with their latest works. It is a feast of arts for the end of 2003 and the beginning of the new year.

Where: Beijing New Millennium Art Gallery, 2/F Diyang Building, 2 Dong Sanhuan Beilu, Chaoyang District
When: till January 15, daily 9 am - 6 pm
Admission: free **Tel:** 8453 6193



Old Town Lille



The Grand Square has always been the heart of the city.

By Sun Ming

Lille, with its abundance of ancient architecture, broad Flemish squares, charming cobbled streets and the richest art gallery outside Paris, is France's fourth-largest city, however most places of interest in the city are within easy walking distance.

Lille, home to a lively cultural scene

Lille has had a lively history, bounced back and forth between France, Austria, Spain and finally back to France in 1667, when the Sun King, Louis XIV, triumphantly captured the city.

It has been an international hub since the 11th century, but the birthplace of Charles de Gaulle retains a Flemish flavor, from the architecture of the beautiful *vielle ville* to its inhabitants' rabid consumption of mussels and beer.

The Grand Square, also known as the Place Du General de Gaulle, has always been the heart of the city. Architecturally, this area boasts a flush of Lille's finest: the sumptuous 17th-century cloistered Vieille Bourse (the original stock exchange) and the elegant Rang de Beauregard shopping arcade, the handsome, double-belfried Chamber of Commerce, and the neo-classical wedding cake of an opera house. Many 17th and 18th century facades have been restored

and generally provide a pleasant cityscape.

Lille's cathedral, Notre-Dame de la Treille, has had a tempestuous time. Legend claims a cathedral was founded on the site in 1066, but it was destroyed after the French Revolution. When reconstruction began in 1854, it was carried out with the same sense of urgency as Barcelona's Sagrada Familia; the facade was finally inaugurated 12 days before the end of 1999. The ensemble turns out to be well worth waiting for, with soaring columns and an exquisite rose window.

Rich collections of arts

Lille is not only the home to a lively cultural scene but also the home to the largest fine arts museum in France outside Paris. The Beaux-Arts is viewed as France's finest art collection after the Louvre.

The museum houses European art from the 15th to the 20th century, including important works by Reubens, Van Dyck, Goya, Delacroix, Pradier and Rodin. For more modern tastes, Greater Lille's Museum of Modern Art houses works by Picasso, Braque, Laurens, Modigliani, Miro and Derain.

Hospice Comtesse, which is now home to an art museum of 15th-18th century Flemish, Dutch and Northern French works, was originally a hospital, founded in 1237.

Festival of Lille

With 100,000 students nearby

and 25 percent of the population under 25, the nightlife in Lille is the best in the north, with countless great bars and clubs.

The major festival of the year, the *Grande Braderie*, takes place over the first weekend of September, when a big street parade and vast flea market fill the streets of the old town by day.

Location

A European hub for high speed rail travel, Lille is 35 minutes from Brussels, an hour from Paris and 1 hour 40 minutes from London. Regular trains to and from Cologne, the Loire Valley and the Mediterranean, as well as a direct rail link to the Air France international terminal at Paris Roissy — Charles de Gaulle Airport complement domestic flights to and from the city's own airport.



Old cobbled streets



Xiaokou Chengbao

Winter Sights

By Steve Lae

Beijing offers many traditional sights in winter, some right on the doorstep, some a little further afield. The following two places offer visitors very different ideals of the "winter romance" of Beijing.

Around Shishahai

For centuries, Shishahai has been the winter playground for Beijingers.

When the lake was frozen, young people rode horse-driven sleds there, however these days, perhaps a consequence of global warming, winter swimming has taken the place of winter sledding.

Chen Ye, 23, often comes to the southern bank of Houhai to watch people swimming in the icy water. "I have never tried, but I like to see them swimming," he says.

In past years, Chen offered toboggans for rent in the winter. "I can earn some 60 yuan on a weekend day. But this winter, the lake doesn't seem to want to freeze."

Chen lives in a *siheyuan* (courtyard house) at Yandai Xiejie. "Many bars are built along the embankments of Shishahai," he says. "Some bars are demonstrating Chinese traditional arts and cultures. However, if you want to learn the winter romance of Shishahai, you should go out and walk along the narrow alleys here."

The old residences at Yandai Xiejie are well preserved. The intricate wooden carvings are newly painted.

At the southern bank of Houhai, Chen meets his friends every Sunday.

"They are Chinese traditional music lovers, and they can play charming music on Chinese traditional musical instruments," Chen says.

"It's a fantastic experience to listen to them, sometimes they take strange instruments I have never seen, and it is interesting to witness how they adjust the tone."

Chen's favorite winter pastime is ice fishing. "I have to quit my hobby this winter. There is no ice on the water."

Walnut Pursuit

Chen Jianfeng, a 43-year-old primary school physical education teacher, found two wild walnuts while cleaning his mother's old house.

"Some old Beijingers keep the habit kneading two walnuts in one hand," Chen says. "It is said that this is good for the heart and circulation."

There are many criteria for judging the value of the walnuts.

"First, the size," Chen says. "The bigger the better. Second, the patterns on the shell, the pattern should be deep and elegant. Third, the history. Some walnuts have been being kneaded for one hundred years, and the color of the walnuts becomes flaring dark red."

Chen has tried to find good walnuts in the past five years. He frequents Liulichang and Panjiayuan. But the expensive walnuts there are not good enough to catch his eyes.

"Some sellers process the walnuts to make them look bright and old," complains Chen.

Whenever he has the time, he bicycles to the mountains on the outskirts of Beijing to find wild walnuts.

"I have not yet found what I want, but I love the bicycle trip," Chen says.

He suggests his ideal place that demonstrates the winter romance of Beijing — Xiaokou Chengbao (Xiaokou Pass) at Miyun County, built 400 years ago by the Ming Dynasty garrison.

People here lead a simple life. The old houses and pass walls are also well preserved. The Great Wall runs above the city, lending a mysterious atmosphere.

Built on a steep slope, the pass features a 1,000-meter wall. Residences with their original design occupy half of the pass area. Pine trees occupy the rest.

Residents here preserve the custom of offering sacrifices to their ancestors on important Chinese holidays.

"I have bought several pairs of walnuts from elderly locals," says Chen. "But I like the life at the pass more, especially in winter, the old people sit on the stones warmed up by the sun rays, smoking a pipe, and the young people are working in the adjacent fields."

Antique dealers frequent the pass to buy old furniture. "They have taken away many valuable historical relics, but they cannot take away the original life style there," says Chen.

Tip: If you want to spend whole night there, the Yao Qiao Yu Pass twenty minutes drive east, offers comfortable beds and delicious local food. Price are 12 yuan for one bed or 60 yuan for a double room.

Getting there: Bus from Dongzhimen to Miyun, one more bus to the pass.



Yandai Xiejie at Shishahai

Photos by Li Xu